

SEPTEMBER, 1969 50c

Desert

MAGAZINE

HOODLING IN VIRGIN VALLEY

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NEW MEXICO PLACE NAMES edited by T. M. Pearce. Lists and gives a concise history of the places, towns, former sites, mountains, mesas, rivers, etc., in New Mexico, including those settled by the early Spaniards. Good for treasure hunters, bottle collectors and history buffs. Paperback, 187 pages with more than 5000 names, \$2.45.

A FIELD GUIDE TO ROCKS AND MINERALS by Frederick H. Pough. Authoritative guide to identification of rocks and minerals. Experts recommend this for all amateurs as one of the best 3rd edition with many new color illustrations. Hardcover, \$4.95.

ANZA-BORREGO DESERT GUIDE by Horace Parker. Third edition of this well-illustrated and documented book is enlarged considerably. Tops among guidebooks, it is equally recommended for research material in an area that was crossed by Anza, Kit Carson, the Mormon Battalion, '49ers, Railroad Survey parties, Pegleg Smith, the Jackass Mail, Butterfield Stage, and today's adventurous tourists. 139 pages, cardboard cover, \$3.50.

EXPLORING CALIFORNIA BYWAYS by Russ Leadabrand. There are two separate books under this title. Volume 1 covers the area from Kings Canyon National Park, near Bishop, to the Mexican Border. Volume 2 covers one or two-day trips around Los Angeles. Both books contain maps for each trip with photographs, historical information, recreational facilities, campsites, hiking trails, etc. Excellent travel guides. Both volumes are slick paperback, 180 pages, \$1.95 each. WHEN ORDERING BE CERTAIN TO STATE WHICH VOLUME NUMBER.

THE WEEKEND TREASURE HUNTER by A. H. Ryan. A companion book to his *Weekend Gold Miner*, this volume is also concise and packed with information on what to look for and what to do with your treasure after you have found it. Subjects range from Beach Combing to Sunken Treasures. Paperback, 76 pages, \$1.95.

DEATH VALLEY JEEP TRAILS by Roger Mitchell. Although a system of paved roads covers Death Valley National Monument, there is even a larger network of back country roads leading to old mining camps, stamp mills and other little-known areas of interest. The author has provided a guide to these places for explorers with back country vehicles. Paperback, illustrated, 36 pages, \$1.00.

GHOST TOWNS OF NEW MEXICO by Michael Jenkinson and Karl Kernberger. This exceptionally well written volume is more than a ghost town guide. It spans the history of New Mexico from the past to the present and brings back to life the conquistadors, gunmen, miners, merchants and politicians who won the West. Kernberger's photographs are gallery quality. Hardcover, quality paper, large format, 153 pages, \$7.50. Makes an excellent gift.

MEXICAN COOK BOOK by the Editors of Sunset Books. Mexican recipes for American cooks, thoroughly tested and suited for products available in the United States. Includes comprehensive shopping guide, all cooking techniques and recipes from soups to desserts and drinks. Large slick paper format, well illustrated, 96 pages, \$1.95.

BOTTLES and RELICS
BY MARVIN AND HELEN DAVIS

This latest bottle book has more than 30 pages of full-color illustrations with the bottles shown in natural settings. In addition to the color there are also dozens of black and white photos of more than 500 bottles. It also includes sections of collection and display of relics such as guns, horns, cooking utensils and other collectors' items. Slick paperback, 155 pages, four-color cover.

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METAL DETECTOR HANDBOOK by Art Lassagne, 2nd edition. Includes history, operating techniques, interpretation of signals, and Directory of Manufacturers. One of the most complete handbooks of its kind. Paperback, 65 pages, \$3.00.

ROUGH RIDING by Dick Cepek and Walt Wheelock. Two veteran travelers have compiled an excellent book on how to drive and survive in the back country. Although based on driving through Baja California, the information is applicable to all areas of the West. Strongly recommended for both amateurs and veterans. Paperback, 36 pages, \$1.00.

REDWOOD COUNTRY by the Editors of Sunset Books. A comprehensive travel guide and history of the giant Redwood trees of Northern California, plus a complete description and guide to the newly published Redwood National Park. Accurate maps and more than 100 photographs. Large format slick paperback, 96 pages, \$1.95.

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BOOK OF CACTUS by Harry C. Lawson. Written for the amateur, this book tells how to plant, care for and identify cactus found in the West. The 36 pages contain 409 small photographs and descriptions of the plants. Paperback, \$2.00.

TREASURE HUNTER'S GUIDE TO THE LAW by Clair Martin Christensen. Answers all of the questions relative to the legal aspect of finding treasure trove. Subjects include Antiquities Act, Mining Claims, Gold Regulations, Trespass and Salvage, Claim Recordings, Tax Aspect and many others. Concise and factual. Paperback, 46 pages, \$2.75.

WILD FLOWERS OF THE PACIFIC COAST by Leslie L. Haskin. A completely revised and enlarged edition, this guide gives a broad scientific basis for a definitive identification of wild flowers. With descriptions are more than 100 full-color photographs, plus black and white, describing 332 flowers and shrubs. Hardcover, 450 pages, \$5.95.

WESTERN CAMP SITE DIRECTORY by the Editors of Sunset Books. Just published, this book lists more than 5000 private and public campgrounds in the 11 western states and British Columbia and Western Alberta, including hundreds of new campsites to care for the ever increasing amount of people taking to the open road. Just right for planning a vacation. Large format, slick paperback, illustrated, 128 pages, \$1.95.

THE WEEKEND GOLD MINER by A. H. Ryan. An electronic physicist "bitten by the gold bug," the author has written a concise and informative book for amateur prospectors telling where and how gold is found and how it is separated and tested, all based on his own practical experience. Paperback, 40 pages, \$1.50.

A GUIDE FOR INSULATOR COLLECTORS by John C. Tibbitts. Long time collector and author of several bottle books, the author has written two volumes on insulators, covering 90 percent of the field. Insulators in Vol. 1 (127 pages) are different than those in Vol. 2 (119 pages). Paperbacks, well illustrated. \$3.00 each. ORDER BY VOLUME NUMBER.

CAMPING AND CLIMBING IN BAJA by John W. Robinson. Contains excellent maps and photos. A guidebook to the Sierra San Pedro Martir and the Sierra Juarez of upper Baja Calif. Much of this land is unexplored and unmapped still. Car routes to famous ranches and camping spots in palm-studded canyons with trout streams tempt weekend tourists who aren't up to hiking. Paperback, 96 pages, \$2.95.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE SOUTHERN SIERRA NEVADA by Russ Leadabrand. Illustrated with good photographs and maps, this volume covers the Sierra region south of the Sequoia National Park, including most of the Sequoia National Forest. Paperback, \$1.95.

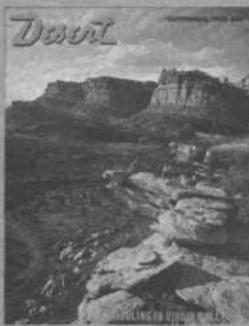
EARTHQUAKE COUNTRY by Robert Iacopi. Published by Sunset Books, this well illustrated book separates fact from fiction and shows where faults are located, what to do in the event of an earthquake, past history and what to expect in the future. Highly recommended for all Californians. Large format, slick paperback, 160 pages, \$2.95.

WILLIAM KNYVETT, PUBLISHER
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BILL BRYAN, Back Country Editor



Volume 32, Number 9 SEPTEMBER, 1969



THE COVER:

Utah's Capitol Reef National Monument is now three times its former geographical size. Typical of the hundreds of miles of spectacular scenery in the Monument is this water canyon photograph by David Muench, Santa Barbara, California.

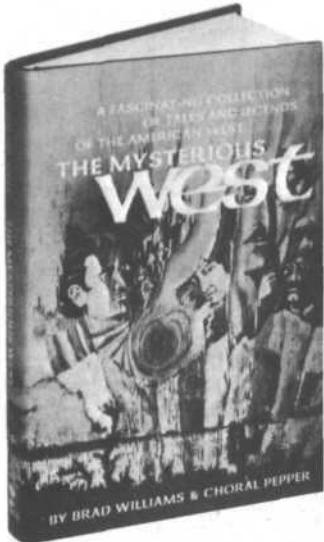
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New factual evidence on the legends of the West



By Brad Williams and
Choral Pepper

This book examines many little-known stories and legends that have emerged from the western region of North America.

Included are such phenomena as the discovery of a Spanish galleon in the middle of the desert; the strange curse that rules over San Miguel Island; the discovery of old Roman artifacts buried near Tucson, Arizona; the unexplained beheading of at least 13 victims in the Nahanni Valley; and many other equally bewildering happenings. Elaborate confidence schemes and fantastically imagined hoaxes are documented, along with new factual evidence that seems to corroborate what were formerly assumed to be tall tales.

Hardcover, illustrated, 192 pages.
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Book Reviews

by Jack Pepper

BEACHCOMBERS' GUIDE TO THE PACIFIC COAST

By the Editors of *Sunset Books*

The sea and the edge of the sea in this scientific age still hold enough mystery to draw curious men. They also hold enough known attractions—fish, shellfish, driftwood, semi-precious stones, surfing waves and other attractions to interest all types of people who are not so much curious as they are in need of a day of outdoor exercise and relaxation.

Today thousands of people are heeding the call of "I must go down to the seas again" and finding a reward in their ventures. This book provides information about the publicly accessible beaches between San Diego and Cape Flattery, Washington to help vacationers and week-enders decide where they want to go—providing they can find space on the beach, and parking areas.

Subjects in the interesting and informative book range from How to See a Sea Otter to How to Surf to How to Fish, with many other how-to-hobbies included. It is beautifully illustrated and includes detailed maps of how to get to the beaches. And once you are there it shows how to identify sea shells. Large format, four-color cover, heavy paperback, 112 pages, \$1.95.

UNDER COVER FOR WELLS FARGO

Edited by Carolyn Lake

The memoirs of old-timers can be tiresome and boring in this day of the jet-set, or they can move as fast as a John Wayne western. I will be greatly surprised if this book is not used as the basis for a western movie or television series.

Fred Dodge was an undercover agent for Wells Fargo during the days when

the West was lawless and when men's lives depended upon how fast they were with a gun.

Dodge wrote as he lived, with vigor and honesty, relating his experiences and adventures as though they were common place everyday happenings. Born in 1854, Dodge was raised among Indians and miners and throughout his life he was associated with men such as Wild Bill Hickock and Wyatt Earp, but, because of being a "secret agent" he remained in the background and kept his anonymity.

Carolyn Lake has done an excellent job of editing the voluminous material and letters about Dodge which she found in a trunk after the death of her father, Stuart Lake, who made Wyatt Earp famous in his book *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal*. He died before starting his book on Dodge. His daughter has fulfilled her father's plans in producing a fascinating and factual history of the wild West which you will find hard to put down once you have started reading. Hardcover, 280 pages, illustrated, \$6.95.

NOTICE

Unless otherwise stated in the review, all books reviewed in DESERT Magazine are available through the Desert Magazine Book Shop. Please add 50 cents per order (not per book) for handling and postage. California residents must also add 5 percent sales tax for the total amount of books.

A Peek in the Publisher's Poke

YOU MAY have noticed some subtle changes in the format of your DESERT Magazine and we hope all of our readers are happy with the end results. The pictures are being given a more dramatic presentation and an endeavor is being made to keep the photos large and clear for easy identification. Some of the articles are set in a different type face to break up the monotony of all the pages looking the same. We hope you like these changes and that we are making

DESERT easier for you to read. With the coming of fall we plan to run a monthly feature on rockhounding and have other ideas which hopefully will bring the readership closer to the desert. We have been receiving many letters from readers who say they like the new DESERT—although we appreciate those letters—actually we love 'em . . . we do not publish them in the Letters to the Editor page. What we do print is new information and criticisms. We want you to tell us what you think is wrong with DESERT for only in this manner can we improve YOUR magazine.

For it is YOUR magazine. Other than the articles written by the editor and occasionally by myself, all the material is sent in by "freelance" writers and photographers; which means people sending in manuscripts and photos they think might be interesting to our readers. So send in your manuscripts, typewritten and double-spaced, accompanied by black and white photographs if at all possible. We are also very much in the market for color transparencies, *which must be larger than 35mm. slides*, of scenic areas of the western desert. Please, no close-ups of flowers. If you have an idea for an article, or want more information about our requirements for color photographs, just drop us a query and we'll be glad to send the information along.

We were greatly cheered with the recent re-opening of the home of the late Cabot Yerxa, a desert pioneer whose man-made pueblo has been mentioned previously in this column. Just when it appeared that vandals would destroy this most unusual structure a group of conservation-minded people got together and purchased the old pueblo from his estate. With extensive restoration having been done it was opened July 4th and is now being operated as a museum exhibiting many of the articles that Yerxa had garnered during a lifetime. The pueblo-museum is located in the thriving desert city of Desert Hot Springs in the Coachella Valley of California.

The cover shot this month features the dramatic scenery to be seen in the Capitol Reef National Monument, which we learned just recently has had its boundaries extended by the Department of the Interior. The new boundaries start north of and include Cathedral Valley and extend south almost to the Purple Hills. This will assure us that another area of this beautiful southwest will be preserved for all to enjoy for generations to come.

William W. Griffith



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RELICS OF THE RIDGE ROUTE

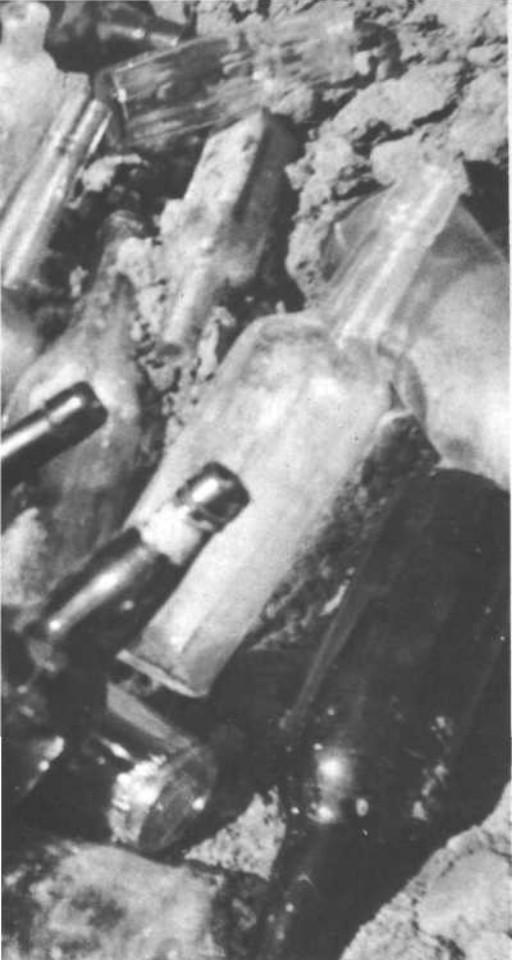
by Robert C. Likes



IN THE EARLY 1900s, a paved road was needed to span the mountains that blocked the flow of traffic northward from Los Angeles to the San Joaquin Valley. After several routes were considered, one was finally selected and construction began in 1914.

This pioneer highway became known as the Ridge Route, a narrow ribbon of concrete that followed the very top of the ridges from Newhall to Bakersfield. By 1916, the Ridge Route was hailed as the greatest influence in promoting unity between the northern and southern sections of the state. It was the main artery through which flowed California's ever-growing motoring population. Several Inns were built to accommodate the weary motorist who had to muscle their horseless carriages for long hours of seemingly endless miles of twisting and turning.

The Ridge Route was relocated in 1933, and the historic Old Ridge Route was abandoned. Once familiar landmarks like the Halfway Inn and Tumble Inn became nothing more than ruins and were soon forgotten. Sandberg's popular resort, where the great and near-great stopped to dine, was slowly dying. In 1963, this



Rain and erosion following a forest fire revealed old bottle dumps resulting in this bonanza found by the author. Bottles had been hidden for more than 30 years.

famous old landmark, now deserted and decaying, burned to the ground, bringing to a close the last link to the roaring twenties on the Old Ridge Route.

It was these ruins that first attracted me to the Old Ridge Route. Records showing the volume of traffic these havens of rest handled were proof there must be large dumps of discarded old bottles existing near each ruin. But, could they be found? The washes and ravines had grown over with brush so im-

mense that it defied man to enter, yet permitted rains to cover the relics of the ridge under a blanket of sandy soil. This made it almost impossible to determine where the main dumps were located. The end result of hours of searching and digging was a token display of the treasures of old glass that lay hidden just out of reach.

Sometimes nature has a way of revealing the very things she has carefully guarded for years. A forest fire, moved by high winds, consumed the dense growth of shoulder high manzanita, leaving in its wake nothing but smoldering stubs on the parched ground. Months later, seasonal rains began washing away the acres of ashes. Trickles of water flowed unrestrained down the ridges over the now unprotected soil, while to the northwest, thunderheads moved in and soon the naked earth felt the full force of the winter storm. Each depression became a churning body of water, eroding top soil that took years to build.

These were the conditions that brought about the discovery of one of the large

Continued on Page 36



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IF YOU would like an exciting and rewarding adventure then go noodling—the Australian term for combing opal dumps. There are numerous opal sites throughout various parts of the western states and if you know where to go you can hunt opal free. But it is much easier to pay a fee to a bonafide opal mine owner for the privilege of hunting the gem stones on his property—and be 99 percent sure of bringing home "bragging stones."

We chose Keith Hodson's Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine in northeastern Nevada's Virgin Valley—just this side of the Oregon line. Keith has two choices for opal hunters; he charges a \$5 fee for noodling his dumps—with a take-home total of opal worth \$200, or a \$150 five-

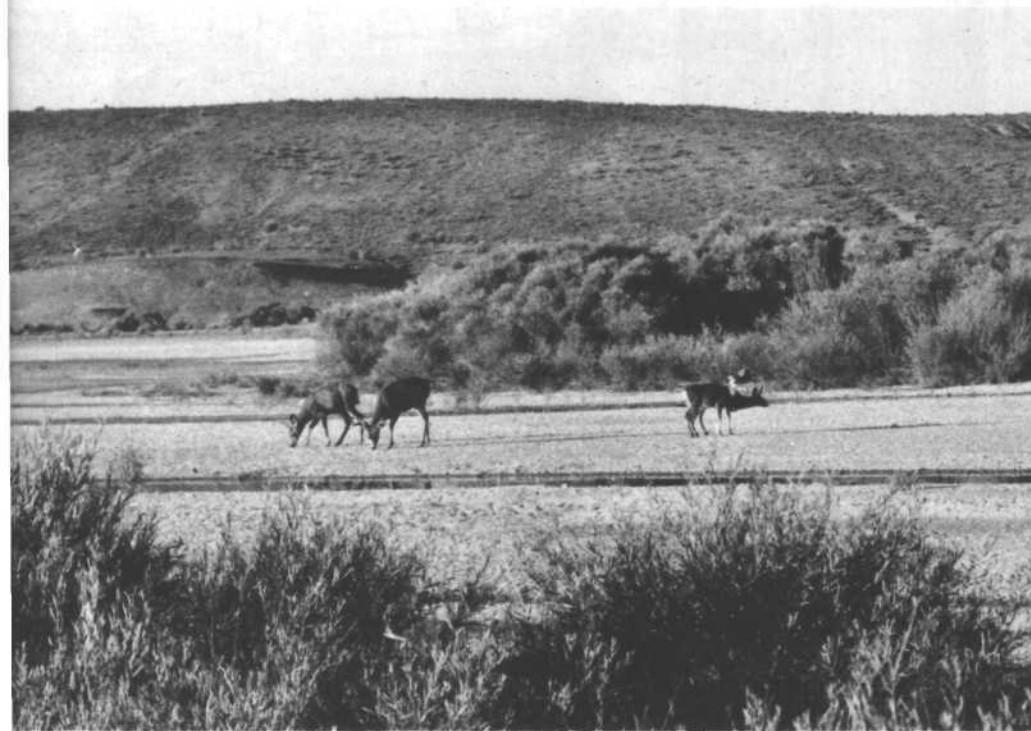
month season "miner's license" in which you can take your time to dig for opal in virgin ground. For this \$150 fee you can take home a total of \$600 worth of gem opal. If you exceed this total, you may purchase the excess at a fraction of the cost.

When noodling, your finds are generally small chips. But, even a tiny grain is still a gem opal! Immersed in glycerine in small glass spheres, capped and jump-ringed to ear-clips for earrings, or hung on a gold chain as a pendant, these small chips are gorgeous!

Using Winnemucca as a starting point to reach Virgin Valley take U.S. 95 north out of Winnemucca. Thirty miles north is the junction with State 8A. Turn west on 8A to Denio. The road goes through



NOODLING IN



historic pioneer country — the Quinn River-King's River region where many clashes took place between the Paiute Indians and the early settlers.

In this country you will see fantastic mirages and funnels of dust devils. It is also a very lonely area. Houses are many miles apart and most are abandoned. Seventy miles from the turnoff you reach Denio where State 8A turns due west again. This is the through road to Cedarville, Calif., some 100 miles westward, and just over the California-Nevada line.

At Denio fill up with gas and check your oil and water. If you need more groceries, this is the place to procure them as it is the end of the line, as far as stores or gas stations are concerned.

There is a 30-mile drive from the Denio road junction to Virgin Valley and the Thousand Creek region. This



Virgin Valley's opal beds (left) are part of a large prehistoric lake said to be 15 million years old. Digging for opal takes patience—but the finds are worth the effort. Specimens of opal (below) in tray are from Virgin Valley. Larger ones in right tray are Australian opal.

(Opposite Page) deer and antelope feed in the meadows early in the mornings.

by Dorothy Robertson

VIRGIN VALLEY

valley is well watered with springs and creeks in many areas. Here, also, is the Charles Sheldon National Antelope Refuge where the Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters is called Duferrena Sub Headquarters. On the Duferrena Ponds there are many ducks and other waterfowl and early in the morning you can see deer or antelope browsing among the grasses fringing the ponds.

This is where you will see the large signs of the Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine pointing south. The road takes you to an old CCC Camp where you will find hot and cold running water, a stone shower room building, rest rooms, picnic tables and benches and stone fireplaces.

From the camp it is just a five-mile drive on the left-hand road junction to the opal fields. Keith Hodson maintains a small sales-room office at the entrance





Some of the fine pieces of opal found by the author and her husband who called their collection an "out-of-this-world jackpot." Photo by Chuck Vollmer.

to the dumps and mine area, where you will sign in and pay your chosen fee. He also has hundreds of specimen bottles for sale. The opal fields are open from 7:30 A.M. to sundown, every day in the week except Wednesday. The season ends September 30.

Actually, I had made two trips to Rainbow Ridge—the first trip one week prior to the one I took with my husband. On my initial trip I paid my noodling fee and brought home a quart jar almost filled with gorgeous scintillating opal chips and a few larger chunks valued at about \$200. When my husband, Allan, saw my loot he decided he wanted to try his luck. He took a week's leave and headed for Virgin Valley, where he decided to gamble on the \$150 digging fee.

On my previous visit to the dumps, I had watched one man digging excitedly as he uncovered a "hot spot" in the clay bank. He had a pail full of opal chunks valued at over \$2300! He had found black opal, honey-colored and clear "jelly" opal—all a blind kaleidoscope of flashing rainbow colors. And he had been digging for less than a week!

Naturally, we wanted to try and locate the "hot spot" but the clay bank looked so different after a week's interim that I

could not locate the place. Keith showed us where he thought the area was, and at dawn the next morning, Allan was at the wall. Keith provides pails of water in which to wash and soak the opal, miner's pick, shovel, and a sharpened screwdriver which is ideal for working out opal pieces.

Virgin Valley's opal beds are a part of a large, prehistoric and long-dry lake, with an age of some 15 million years. This is fairly recent as far as opal is concerned, for Australian opal beds are 75 million years old. Opal was formed eons ago by the conifers, mostly sequoia redwoods, as driftwood dropping into the lake and becoming immersed. The beach material is a clay of the bentonite family called montmarillinite. This bentonite is an altered volcanic ash. Every bit of Virgin Valley opal is a cast after wood. It is not a petrification and that is why you never find growth rings in Virgin Valley opal specimens. But you do find an opalized outer shell or "bark" appearance around limb-sections of opal.

As the wood rotted away, it was replaced with the silica which came from the clays. Opal was first found in Virgin Valley down among the sagebrush roots along the old shorelines. But as opal hunters began working the areas, the low-

er reaches of the ancient lake shore were cleaned out. In time all this earth-moving created mounds, and the opal levels began to extend upwards until they reached the present level. Regularly Keith bulldozes the acreage, equalizing the earth, making it easier for prospective hunters to find opal.

Keith's mine proper is off-limits, for he and his family work it themselves. Sometimes he will make an exception and take viewers down into the mine. The tailings from his own mine are dumped outside by ore-cars and people may noodle the mine dump also.

On the morning of our dig, Allan worked for four hours without finding a single chip of opal. Then I heard a shout. I arrived at his diggings in time to see him gently disengage the most beautiful specimen I have ever seen. It wasn't large—only $2\frac{1}{2}$ " in length, $\frac{3}{4}$ " in width and almost $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. But the color! It was black opal—a gorgeous deep-burning flashing flame of royal purple, ruby, deep emerald and gold. Keith said it was a beautiful, rare specimen with a potential value of \$1000 if it was cut up into individual jewelry stones, and worked and polished. If left as a specimen, it would be worth far less.

Within two days, we dug and recovered our \$600 quota of gem opal. I must say Keith is extremely generous in his grading of the precious stones. As far as I know, I have never heard of any opal-hunter at Rainbow Ridge leaving dissatisfied.

We had different types of opal, all fantastically beautiful. Some were a light, honey-opal suffused with flashing pinfire in a myriad of colors; others were black opal, and clear jelly opal—all scintillating with fire.

And to augment the bigger pieces of opal Allan dug out, I spent my time on my knees combing through the clods to pick up each tiny chip. I have dozens of small bottles filled with opal chips that dazzle the eyes.

Was it worth it? I'll say it was! I have made numerous gift items by making floating-gems jewelry—glass bulbs filled with glycerine and opals.

So, for a different type of trip try your luck at the opal fields. You'll never be the same again—once you find your first flashing opal! □

BACK TRAIL TO A PLATA



IN AUGUST 1889, a sheepherder was walking behind his band of sheep in the high mountain country near the headwaters of the South Fork of the Little Bear River. This small willow-bordered stream, lined with beaver dams, drains the mountain area northeast of Ogden, Utah and flows into Cache Valley, eventually to find its way into the Great Salt Lake.

While following the sheep he noticed a rock reflecting the sun's rays with an unusual gleam. When he picked it up he discovered it was exceptionally heavy for its size. Several days later, when the foreman brought supplies to his camp, the herder showed him the rock. The foreman took a piece of it back to Ogden with him. The sample was sent to a Salt Lake City assayer who reported that it contained more than 400 ounces of silver to the ton!

The foreman hurried back to the sheep camp. With the herder he went to the discovery site and located a mining claim which they named the Sundown. The required location papers were filed at the

county courthouse in Logan. Although the newly discovered area of expected riches was located nearer to Ogden than to Logan the discovery site was in Cache County, of which Logan was the county seat. Cache County had been named for the fur caches hidden in its valleys by early day trappers but its name would soon be better known for the cache of mineral wealth discovered by the sheepherder.

When news of the sheepherder's discovery leaked out prospectors rushed into the area and located other claims. Some of these later became famous for the wealth they produced, including the Lucretta, Mountain Boy, Yellow Jacket and Red Jacket.

Due to lateness of the season and the approach of winter to the high mountains little work was done on the claims that year but as snow began melting on the high ridges activity began to boom. Prospectors who had been waiting impatiently in the lower valleys moved into the area and by the time the Sego Lilies were blooming 1500 miners, prospectors,

by George A. Thompson

promoters, merchants, and camp followers were on the scene and more than 100 new claims had been located. That summer a line of log cabins and false front buildings, which the miners called La Plata, Spanish for silver, sprung up along the small creek. The clear cold snow water of the stream soon became muddied and the beaver dams were broken down by prospectors in search of silver treasure. Cabins and business houses spread out where only a few months earlier a coyote had silently followed the herder's sheep.

The community soon boasted two stores, a barber shop, and a combination saloon and gambling hall. The Thatcher Brothers opened a bank, and a newspaper with the impressive title of *The Special Courier* appeared on the streets. Appar-

ently the miners had little time for reading or else they spent their idle time in more entertaining pursuits for the new paper published its last issue when winter's first snow blanketed the ridges. A post office was also opened and among the first riders to carry the mail from Ogden Valley was David O. McKay, now 95 years old and president of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon) Church.

Rich silver was found right at the surface in many of the claims with values as high as \$1700 per ton being reported. Some of the ore contained as much as 46% lead and 28% zinc in addition to high silver values and reports of other rich finds were being heard daily. Confidence and prosperity were evident everywhere in La Plata while speculation in its mining stocks kept the Salt Lake Mining Exchange busy. And, like most boom camps, promoters fleeced the unwary with their fancy gilt-edged stock certificates, often issued on properties they had never seen and which at best were of doubtful worth. At least one sale appeared to be legitimate; the sheepherder and his foreman partner sold their

Sundown claim to Thatcher Brothers Bank for a reported \$10,000.

Ore from La Plata's mines was hauled by teams up the bottom of the steep gulch where the town was located and across the ridge top to the headwaters of Beaver Creek which they followed down a rough and winding road to the South Fork of the Ogden River. From there the teams followed the river to Huntsville, past the present site of Pineview Dam, and down a narrow, twisting canyon to Ogden. There the ore was loaded aboard the Utah Northern Railroad and shipped to the smelters west of Salt Lake City. The stage road followed the same route from Ogden to Huntsville but there it turned up Wolf Creek, climbing a steep and rocky canyon to La Plata. The stage route was too steep for the heavy ore wagons to follow.

After weathering the blizzards of winter, La Plata appeared to be prospering but there were warning signs that all was not well. Several of the smaller mines closed when they ran out of ore while ore values at the larger mines decreased rapidly as their shafts were sunk

Evening shadows over the abandoned mining town of La Plata with the back road winding down to the empty cabins.

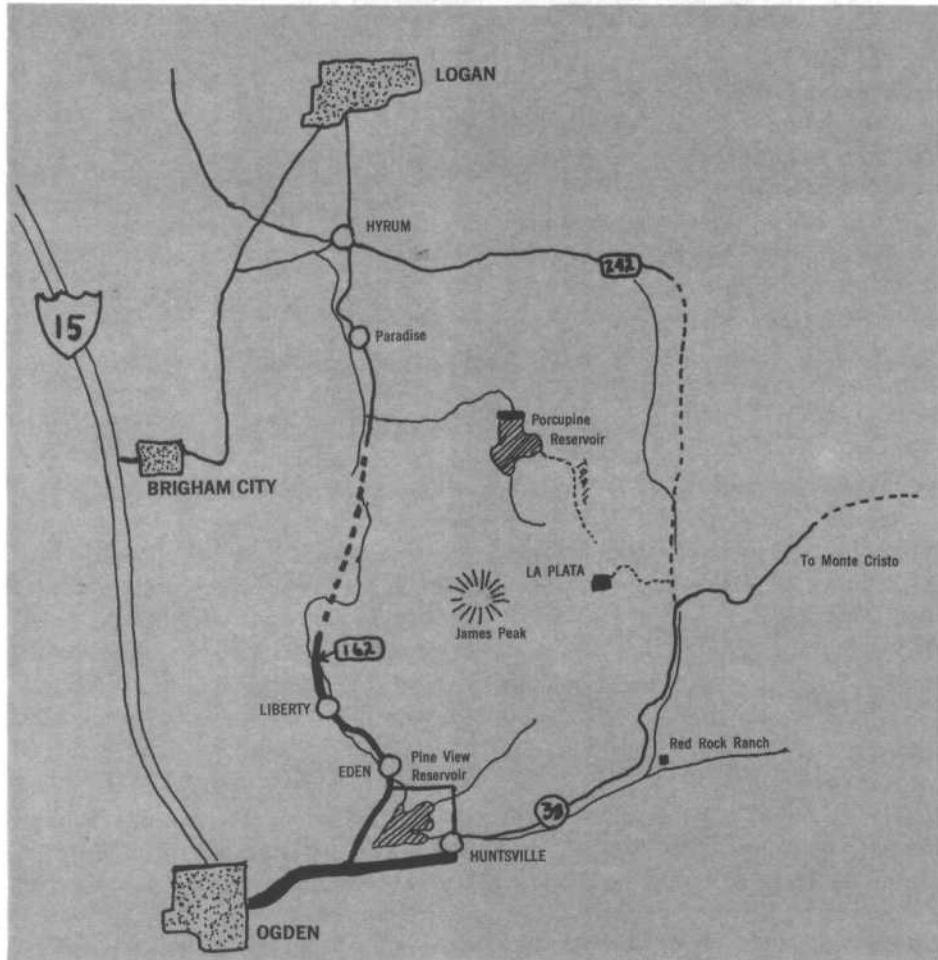


deeper. Many of the shafts had been sunk near the bottom of the canyon and soon water seeped into the workings.

As ore values decreased and depth and pumping expenses increased more and more of the mines ceased to operate. The new owners of the Sundown sank an expensive shaft but no great bonanza was uncovered and when winter came again it closed also.

Still new claims were located and new mines employed miners from the closed properties. Housewives went about their chores, coins still clinked across store counters and card tables, and the log boarding houses still housed crews of bachelor miners. But it was apparent the boom was over and the decline had begun. The saloons closed earlier and the tinkle of the honky-tonk piano didn't sound quite so loud. With fewer miners working there was less money in circulation and stores began to close their doors.

Only a few hopefule stayed to weather the silver panic of 1893. When the last mines closed the miners left the silent workings and boarded up their cabins. Over the years the deserted buildings fell victim to the deep snows of the high mountain winters and the driving winds sweeping down from the peaks of the Monte Cristo Range. Soon little remained of the small camp at the head of the Little Bear River. Beavers returned to build their dams and deer came back to drink water from the creek which was sparkling clear again. And sheepherders





followed their herds along the canyon bottom which once knew the shout of voices and the roar of mine machinery.

By the standards which western mining camps were measured La Plata was never a boom camp of great notoriety but it produced \$3,000,000 during its short-lived heyday. Today the old wagon road up Beaver Creek is a paved highway passing several miles from the old camp but separated a world away by barbwire fences and locked gates. There is almost nothing left of the stage road up Wolf Creek and the way is long, but if the hiker takes along a fly-rod and stops to fish awhile he might be rewarded with a catch of native trout.

Several miles below the old camp on the Little Bear River a water storage project called the Porcupine Dam has been built. Fishing is good there and there are uncrowded camp sites. An old road which winds up the canyon beyond the lake deteriorates quickly into a foot trail. This back trail to La Plata is probably the most interesting and scenic way to get to the old town. Although the climb is steep the magnificent mountain scenery more than compensates the hiker for his effort.

It was on one of those perfect autumn days, when golden Aspen leaves were falling, that I followed the back trail to La Plata. A gray coated deer standing by the decaying two story log boarding house where bachelor miners

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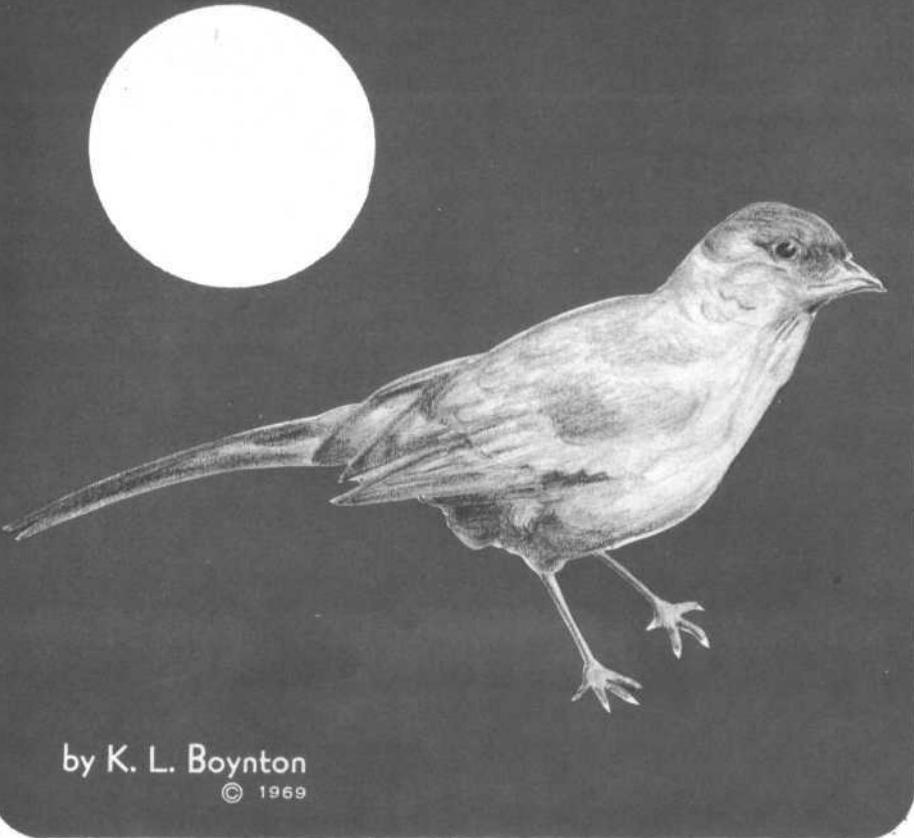


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Towhee Tactics



by K. L. Boynton

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AS BIRDS go, Abert's towhee isn't very glamorous. A dingy overall grey bird except for a dark face, it is about robin size and has a long tail. Songwise, its sharp "Peek!" forcefully delivered doesn't call forth raptures from listeners. But this drab looking bird, at home in the seared and blistered wastelands of California, Arizona and New Mexico has achieved a bit of fame among desert scientists.

True enough, the Abert towhees are found in cottonwood thickets, mesquite and chapparal near irrigation ditches and streams and not in barren open stretches far from water. Still, so well adapted are these birds to high temperature living they thrive even in the low hot Colorado desert.

Every animal has a normal range of body temperature within which he operates. A drop too far below this, or a rise too far above, is fatal. To stay in business, therefore, the

animal must somehow maintain this balance between the heat of its own body and that of its surroundings. It must not produce or take on more heat from its environment than it can lose.

Obviously, such balance keeping is hard in the desert. Many rodents and some birds such as certain owls avoid extra heat loads by going underground during the day, but not the Abert towhee. A tree and bush percher, he must face additional problems caused by poor shelter.

Just being a bird in the desert is tough in the first place, for birds are great little heat-making machines themselves. Their small bodies work at a fast rate, burning up oxygen, as a very high expenditure of energy is necessary for flying. All this activity produces heat and results in higher body temperature. Feathers are hot, too, designed to hold in body heat by trapping warm air layers, so birds are overdressed for hot air tempera-

tures. To make matters worse, they have no sweat glands.

The Abert towhees haven't heard all this bad news about themselves, and hence they do not know they shouldn't be living in the desert. They go ahead raising bouncing families of from three to four bright-eyed chicks in deep cup-like nests in what trees or bushes there are around. And when the youngsters are at last feathered and smart enough to know the clan's food finding trick of kicking the ground debris around to find seeds, they take up desert residence, too. The Abert towhee tribe increases.

Desert Biologist Dawson, observing all this asked himself: what does this bird have going for him? How come he flourishes when cousin brown towhee so much like him is not to be found in desert conditions, sticking instead to the more moderate coastal regions? Does this one know better how to exploit arid conditions, or is there something under those grey feathers that doesn't meet the eye — some temperature regulating device?

So naturally enough Dawson set about finding the answer, and he came out with some facts surprising in themselves, and stimulating to some long, long thoughts on life in general.

Being a bird has its drawbacks, to be sure, but there are some advantages too. Birds can fly to sources of water, and change residence over a distance to a more favorable spot, both of which are real survival pluses. Oddly enough, the high body temperature that is normal in birds can be an advantage up to a point, too. Desert birds run from 102.2 to 107.6 on the average (a dog's normal is 101.4F) thus birds can stay "cool" longer because they continue to lose heat to the environment until the day's air temperature equals and passes that of their own. Then in turn they must begin to take on heat from the environment.

And here, paradoxically, the feather overcoat helps to a point, acting as insulation and delaying the heat transfer for awhile. And birds,

by clamping down their feathers, squeeze out the warm layers of air, and cool themselves further. One more ace under the wing, so to speak, are the more sparsely feathered areas, generally located on the chest sides, so that by holding its wings out, the bird can unload heat at these barer spots.

Also, while lacking sweat glands, birds can cool themselves by panting. Stepping up their breathing rate increases the movement of air over the moist surfaces of their lungs and bronchial tubes and cooling takes place by evaporation. In this too, a set-up peculiar to birds might play a very important part. They have a series of air sacs that connect with and supplement the work of their lungs. These large thin walled bags lie outside the lungs in the body cavity, and they may well help ventilate and cool the interior part of the body during panting.

But panting involves water loss through evaporation, and a bird dies if it becomes dehydrated, as does any animal. Thus, while it helps for awhile, panting is a source of danger and its accompanying water loss must be compensated by additional intake.

Now all these being-a-bird pluses and minuses apply equally to the Abert and the brown towhees, so, thought Dawson, it must be that the Abert's body temperature can go higher without being fatal. But to his surprise, he found that the lethal point was exactly the same for both birds: 116.4F; (in man it is 110F.)

Does heat tolerance up to the lethal point make the difference in Abert's desert success? Well, the brown towhee has to drink much more water under the same air temperature conditions. And above a certain point loses water faster, so showing greater sensitivity to heat.

How about body heat production through stepped-up metabolism as the day gets hot? Yes, beginning at 93.2F, the brown towhee starts manufacturing slightly more heat per unit of weight. And actual panting differences? Neither bird loses more by panting than half the heat it produces, so Dawson concluded

it didn't do either of them enough good to be a sure way to lose heat in high air temperatures. Both birds, therefore, accumulate heat as the day gets hotter.

Does the Abert have a special system of slowing down the speed of its body processes such as sinking into a torpor during the long hot hours? Nothing doing; he's wide awake. Everything pointed to the fact that the Abert does not have anything fancier than his cousin to buck high temperature living.

This naturally left the status at the old quo: the brown towhee in the coastal regions, the Abert rejoicing in the desert, and the scientist still without an answer.

But Dawson took another hard look at his figures and findings and he saw that the Abert had several small edges over the brown, any of which might be discounted as not significant in itself, but when they were added together could total up a score that might mean survival and success. For instance, the Abert showed it could tolerate heat slightly better than the brown. It lost a little less water at high temperatures, its body temperature was a little lower under heat stress, and it was unable to go without water entirely for 24 hours at an air temperature of 102.2F with no ill effects. In fact, in hot temperatures with water available, the Abert drank considerably less water than the brown, showing that it needed less for cooling.

For a bird that has to face high temperature living these "edges" didn't look like much to work with, but with the right behavior, they might indeed count.

So Dawson did a lot of Abert towhee watching and found that behavior-wise this bird "knows" what he's about. He times his schedule, being active in the early morning—on the ground seed foraging, flying short distances, or socializing. In the hot hours of the day he takes himself out of circulation, retiring to the deepest shade he can find as close to water as he can get. He drinks occasionally, splashes water on himself now and then wetting his feathers, which acts as evaporative

cooling. While he can't keep his temperature steady, he can slow down its rise until the big desert cools off towards the end of the day. Then he's out seed eating again. Thus he can stand the heat of desert living that keeps the brown towhee out.

The Abert towhee is in his way a scientific headliner because he shows what a BIG difference little differences can make, and how it is that a bird, small of body, fast of metabolism, can stay above ground in the desert day.

His is a successful life because he is in balance, albeit it a very delicate one, with his surroundings. All of which gives rise to philosophic contemplation of the ways of birds and men: everyone has little "edges" to his advantage; if birds can make the most of theirs, why can't men? □

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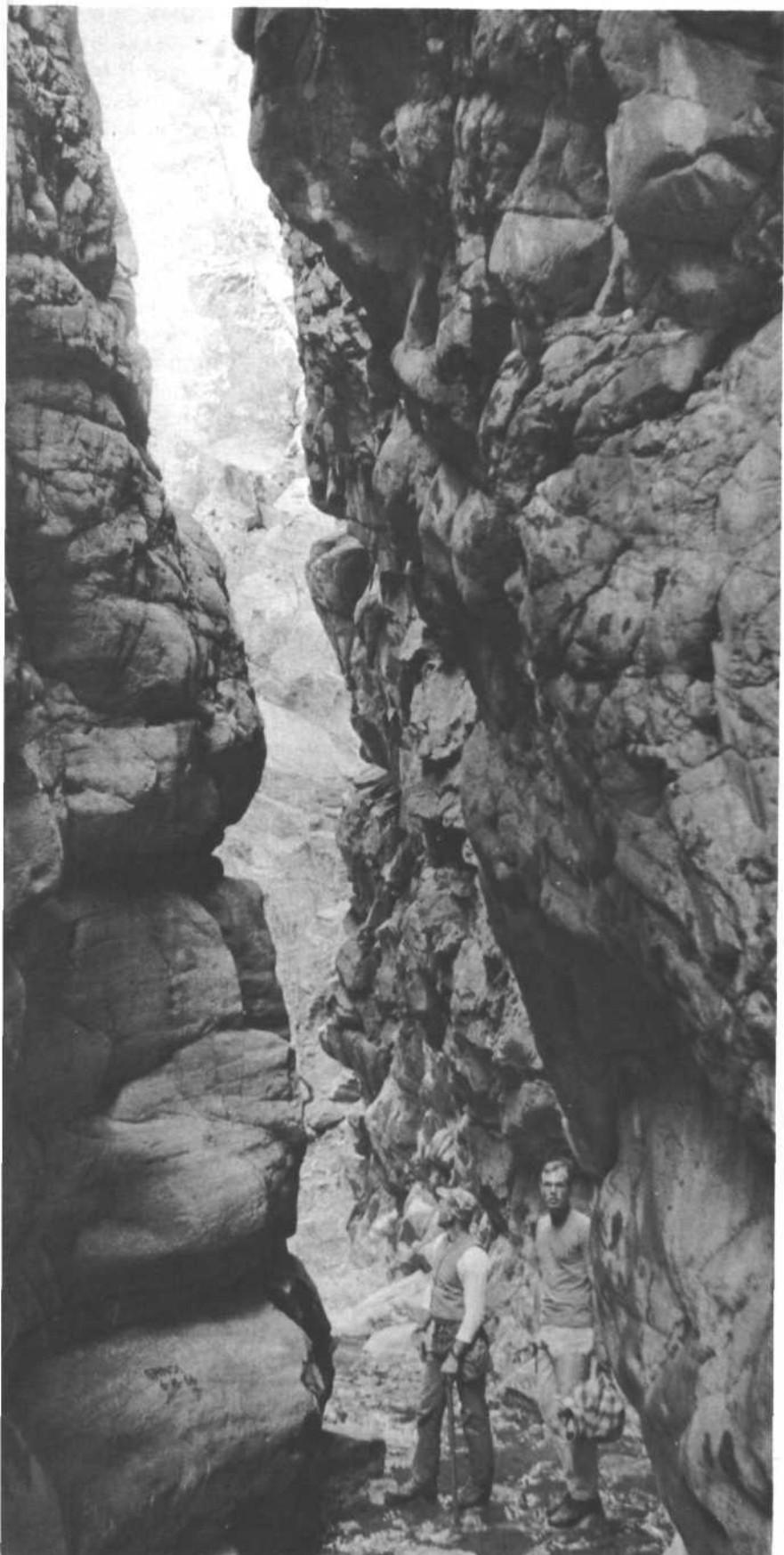
SALES — RENTALS — TERMS

The Explorer

1207 El Camino Real
Santa Clara, California 95050

Arizona's Canyon of the Big Sleep

by Ernie Cowan



WE CALL it La Canada de Sueño Grande, but the official name is much less descriptive. To us Ramsey Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains of southeast Arizona is better called the Canyon of The Big Sleep.

Ramsey Canyon could have been the spot where Rip Van Winkle curled up to

One of the many weird geological formations in Ramsey Canyon (left) is The Box, entrance to a green valley with trees and high grass.

The narrow aperture is 150 feet long. A visitor (right) examines some of the many bottles on display and sold by Nel Brown, long-time Canyon resident.



slumber those 20 years. The lush green hills which surround the canyon are teeming with wildlife and natural history. It is a paradise spot to be explored and enjoyed.

Grass-covered meadows invite one to pause awhile and catch a few winks, and the musical brook running through the canyon is a marvelous lullaby. We aren't the only ones to think so highly of Ramsey Canyon. In 1965 the federal government declared the area a natural historical landmark because of the significant plant, animal and geologic formations found there. Within the few square miles of the canyon there are several rarities including birds, snakes, and rocks which are found nowhere else in the world.

The mountains surrounding Ramsey Canyon overlook the community of Sierra Vista on the fringes of Army Fort Huachuca. This was Apache country and the stories of the Redman and his activities in this area are plentiful. Fort Huachuca was a major Army stockade during frontier days and it wasn't many miles from there that Cochise made his last stand against the calvary as they won the west.

To get to Ramsey Canyon take State 90 east from Sierra Vista, between Tucson and Douglas, turn south on State 92 and

look for Ramsey Canyon Road on your right in about six miles. There are several features to enjoy just motoring into the canyon, but there are also places to stay for the family that has time and wants to explore.

Adrian and Alta Hon have two modern cottages on the banks of Ramsey Creek which they rent to Canyon visitors. Hon's Hummer Haven is a prime spot for hummingbird watching and fanciers have come from all over the nation in the past to view the pocket-sized birds. Varieties rare to the United States are common here. Many tropical varieties of hummers reach the northern limits of their range in Ramsey Canyon which is only about 10 miles north of the Mexican border.

The Hons are experts on the many varieties of winged visitors and can quickly point out the rare ones found only in the area. Spring and early summer are the best times for bird watching, but there are always feathered visitors to enjoy no matter what the season.

At the end of the public road into the canyon lives Nel Brown. Nel is as much a part of the canyon as the trees. She has lived there many years and knows the canyon intimately. Nel has perhaps one of the finest collections of old bottles that I have ever seen. Many of them are for

sale to anyone who happens along. Ramsey Canyon was an early gold mining area and Nel has combed the many gold camp dumps and collected the fragile treasures, many valued at well over \$100.

For the naturalist, Ramsey Canyon is a Disneyland of nature. Within the canyon can be found the wild pig of the southwest — Javelina, the racoon-like Coati Mundi, white tail deer, mountain lions and occasionally the jaguar or ocelot.

Geologic formations of the area are astounding. The creek has cut through hundreds of feet of rock in one area creating a formation known as "The Box." The Box is about 150 yards long and in places not more than an arm's span wide. The rock cliffs tower overhead several hundred feet. Once through The Box the canyon opens into a wide green valley with pine, oak, and fir trees and a mat of high grass. Permission to pass beyond Nel's home into The Box must be obtained since you must cross private property. But if you are not a hunter and just want to enjoy the scenery, your chances are pretty good.

The area can be reached from Miller Mountain to the east along public trails, but this is a little longer and less scenic route. A check with the U.S. Forest Service to obtain a map of the area would be helpful in planning a hiking trip into the canyon from Miller Mountain. The U.S. Geological Survey Topographical maps of the area are also an invaluable aid in locating trails and old mines. The Sunnywide 15-minute quadrangle covers the canyon area.

Beyond The Box an old mining road drops to the canyon floor from the surrounding hills and curves along the canyon bottom and leads one to several old mines in the area. It's paradise for the rock hunter or photographer.

Man has left his mark in Ramsey Canyon, but nature is slowly reclaiming her domain in the area south of The Box. No one lives beyond this point today, but the valley was once teeming with activity around the turn of the century and the previous 25 years.

If you have a week, or maybe only a day to spend in Ramsey Canyon, try to save a few minutes for a nap under a big shade tree. Only then can you really appreciate La Canada de Sueno Grande.





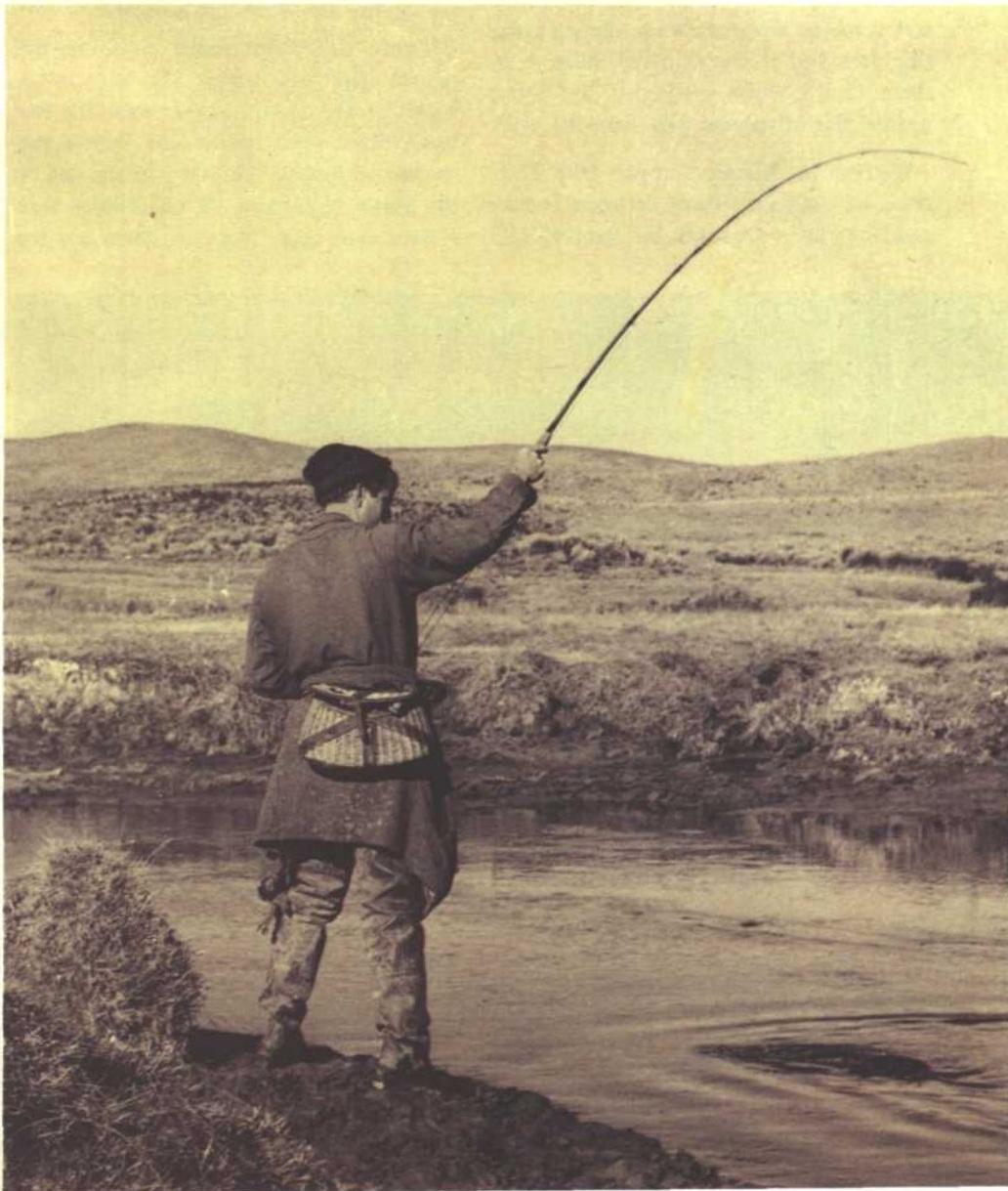
fishing for desert..

MY THREE youngsters watched from the sagebrush as I cast a small silver spinner into the back eddy. As I retrieved it through the slack water to the current's edge my leader stopped. I tugged cautiously in case of an unseen snag, and instantly my line began powering downstream.

Whatever it was, I knew it was big. Since this stream carried nothing but trout and chubs, I felt a little more anticipation than usual. Finally the fish moved into rapids. There I had my first look at a brown trout at least 21 inches long.

Another 50 feet downstream he lashed into a root-laden bank. I wasn't certain how long the light leader would hold him. Yet without some pressure on him he would hopelessly entangle himself. I'd brought the kids along so their mother, back at the camper, could enjoy a short nap. One had been entrusted with the net. In several minutes the fish began to tire, and Wade, age 5, came up with the net. Then I put the mesh under four pounds of brown trout.

Back at the camper, Wade showed the fish to his mother. We were only gone 20 minutes, but the kiddies had also each landed one fish. What's more we were parked on concrete; it was the middle of the day, and there was no signs of any anglers having fished here.





You don't have to fight tree limbs and brush while fishing for trout (left) in the lower section of Utah's Fremont River. Author's daughter (above) isn't exactly sure she liked modeling with these two beauties.

That's southern Utah's Fremont River. Although heading at Fish Lake with an altitude of 8700 feet, the Fremont quickly spills into the desert. After coursing through Capitol Reef National Monument, the Fremont empties into Lake Powell.

Because of its bleak surroundings, with none of the pines or clear cascades usually associated with trout streams, the Fremont is often overlooked. Many tourists spend several days at the beautiful campgrounds along the Fremont inside Capitol Reef without even realizing it holds trout. One California couple told me they had brought along fishing rods, tried a lake 40 miles away, and wondered now if there was any place they might use them again. That evening I caught half a dozen browns and rainbows just upstream from their campground.

Returning to this same stream twice

the next month, I took and released 17 trout over 14 inches. This is not unusual. I have been visiting the Fremont each spring for 12 years, and except for the rare occasion of a flash flood, have always come away with three or four big browns.

The excellent fishing is not the only remarkable thing about the Fremont. It is the solitude. An angler can often find a ridge of crimson cliffs with himself as the only admirer. Or he may find nesting Canadian geese in the Bicknell Bottoms area. Deer and predators are frequent visitors to the area. One reason is the lack of population. Less than 2000 persons reside in Wayne County, 40 miles off U.S. 89, Utah's main north-south highway artery. Turn east at Richfield or Sigurd on U.S. 24. When looking at a map it is understandable why most anglers avoid this region,

BROWNS

by
Hartt Wixom

with the remote, trackless names; Sulfur Creek, Grand Wash and Dirty Devil. They include water but hardly sound like names associated with trout.

What does not show on the map is the cold water supplied by springs along the stream, and the high altitude which provides trout food. Rock rollers and stone fly nymphs of large size are found among the moss and clay banks of this almost rockless river. The smooth, murky water surface hides a major lunker staple, the chub.

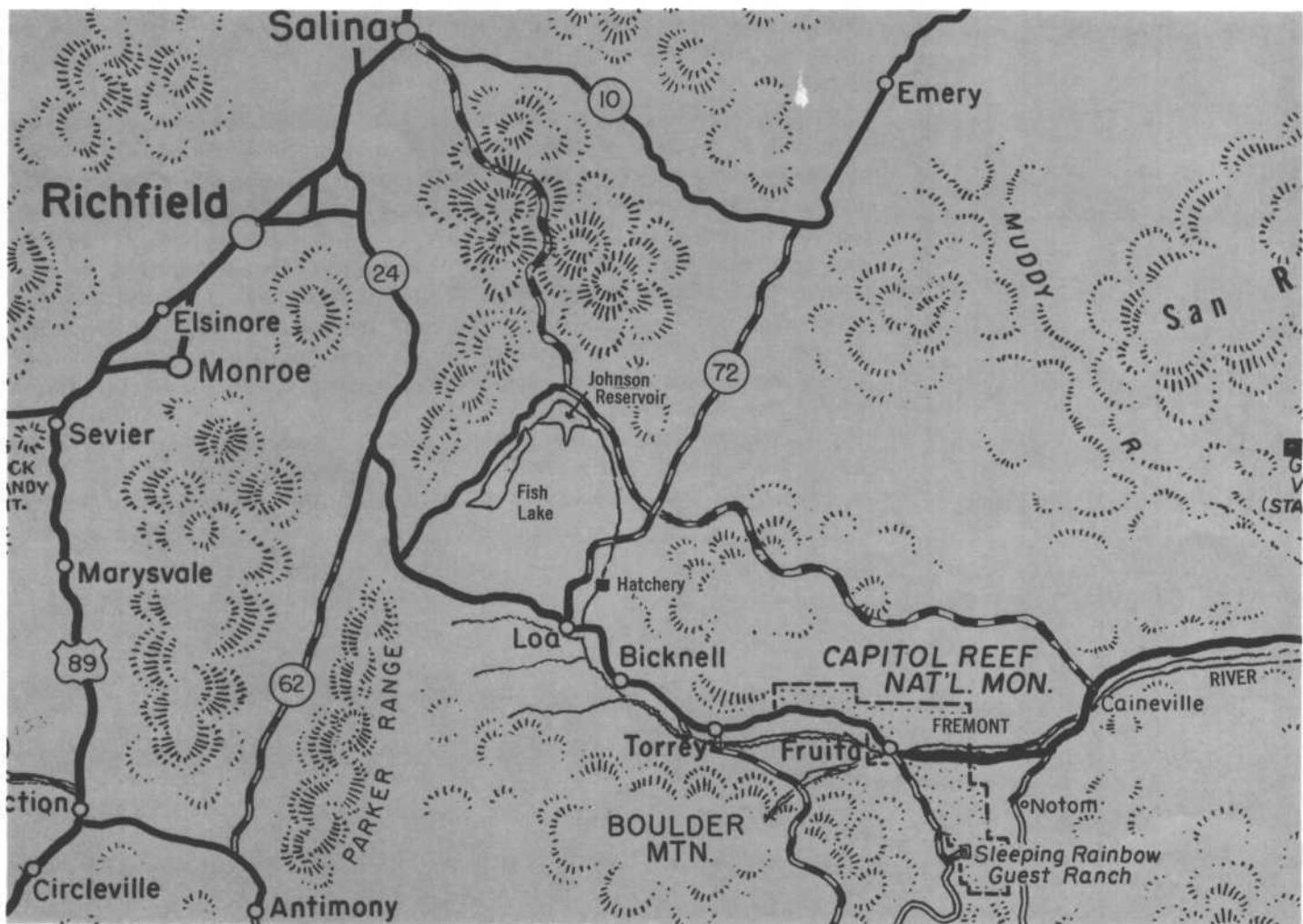
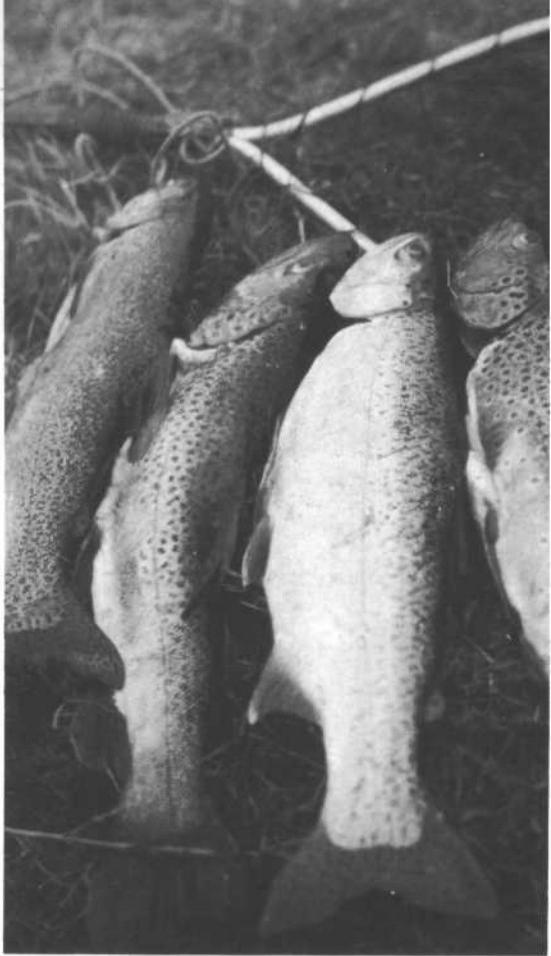
Most of the 6900 to 6500 foot altitude of the Fremont is without trees or other scenic picnicking areas. Perhaps that is why few fishermen bother with the Fremont. But for those who have cast into these waters there are usually just as many quickly convinced anglers. This isn't to say there are not some slow times—in the summer months even this spring-fed river seems to be too hot for feeding trout. But in spring and fall the browns go on a feeding rampage. March is the best time for rainbows,

and many spawning fish up to six pounds are taken each early spring.

There are many intriguing forest areas around the Fremont Valley. One is the Boulder plateau where alpine lakes filled with brook trout can be visited by jeep or horseback. Fish Lake, Johnson Reservoir, Mill Meadow and Forsythe Reservoirs are others producing large fish. The upper Fremont River is also a good place for large cutthroat.

Many veterans of this desert country prefer the lower Fremont, hot sun, sand, and winds notwithstanding. The trout are larger below Bicknell, and if fishing early or late in the day it is an excellent place for the entire family. With little brush or trees, and a likely lunker lair almost anywhere in the deep water, it is an easy place to fish. I usually let the smaller ones throw out a worm and wait. There are fewer streams in the West where they are just as likely to hook into a huge trout.

Another nice thing about the desert surroundings. With little farming and





Fly fishing is best near Bicknell, but big bucktails and streamers in the hands of a skillful angler are also good bets on the river near Torrey. It is a good idea to take along extra leader tippets because the Fremont's big browns have a way of coiling them around sub-surface roots and rocks, however few the angler may see. These fish grow heavy and huge-finned, often amazing an angler with their strength. Both browns and rainbows are prone to jump at any time.

A fish hatchery near Loa supplies plenty of rainbows at easy access points. But the browns, sometimes naive due to the low fishing pressure, are the species which keep fishermen happiest here. Some of the bigger ones are taken after dark. The Fremont, as is usual with all Utah year-around waters, is also open night and day. Its fishing season never closes.

It can yield a lunker almost anytime, and it often does. But you don't have to take my word—try it and see for yourself. □

closed land to worry about, the vacationer and angler can go up and down the stream just about any place he pleases. Naturally there are some live-stock gates, and landowners appreciate the usual amount of courtesy. Or the vacationing family can camp at the cottonwood meadow at Capitol Reef and use it as a base of operations for hiking to Hickman Natural Bridge, looking at the wind-carved cliffs, hiking down the old pioneer road which once followed Grand Wash, or fishing. There are also Indian writings and rocks.

The Utah non-resident fishing license is \$15 a season, or \$5 for five days. A 2-day license may be purchased for \$2.50. Further information may be obtained by writing to the Utah Fish-Game Department, 1596 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah. Inquiries to Capitol Reef should be sent to the headquarters office in Fruita. In addition to a scenic, cliff-surrounded campground, Fruita also has a lodge, two gasoline stations and a cafe-store. Other supplies, including film and bait, can be purchased at Torrey, nine miles upstream from Fruita. Below Fruita are some spectacular waterfalls and cascades, but few trout. The elevation here is too low, the water too warm.



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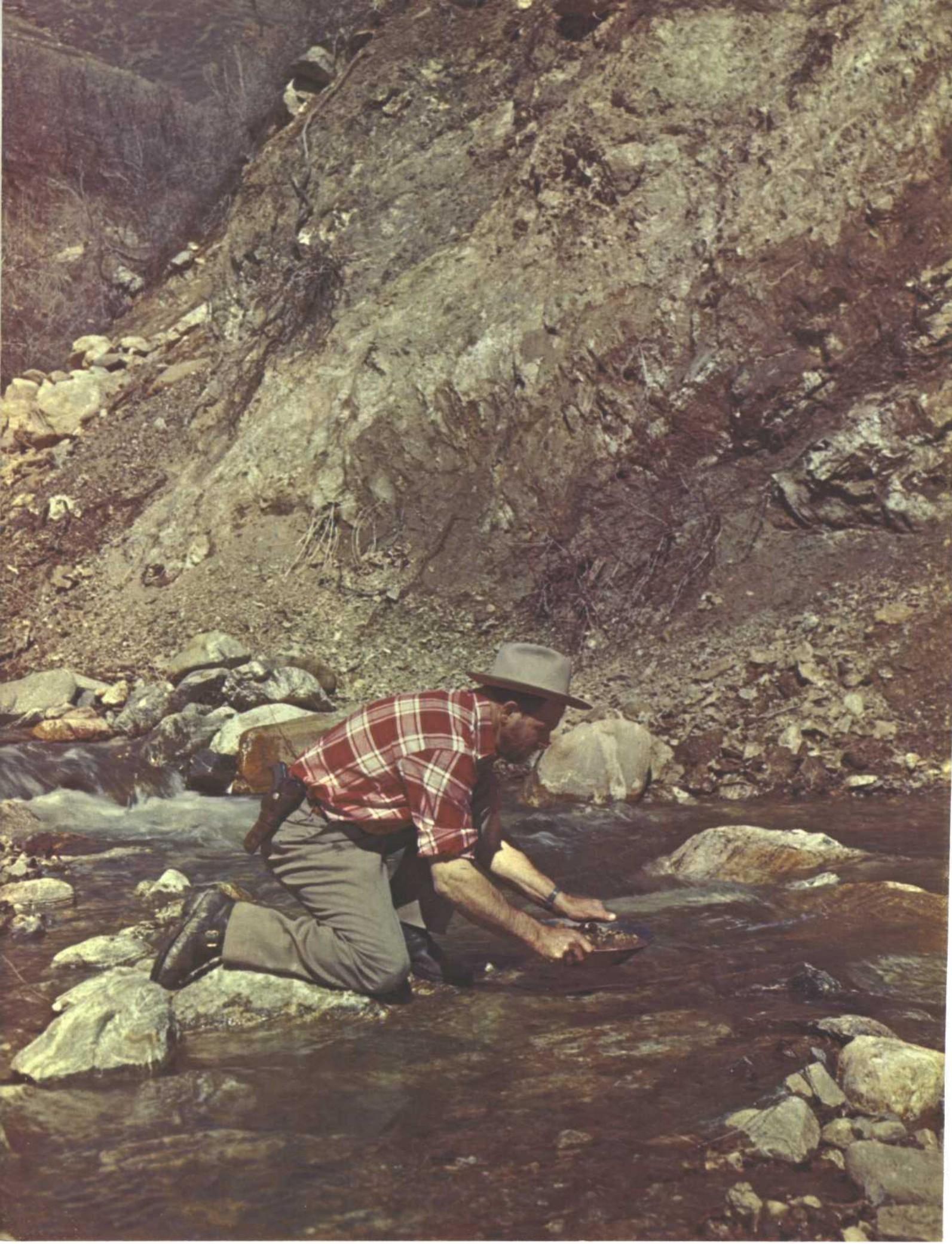


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PAN HAPPY

by Ken Marquiss

DON'T LET my establishment look fool you. It is true I have no unwashed guru mop, beads, daisies or tinkle bells. I have no polka dot blueprints, cranked out of an egghead sociology factory for instant Utopia, and I don't pay weekly tribute to some psychiatrist. Nevertheless I, too, belong to a kind of lost generation and have my own hang-up—I'm gold pan happy!

So is my wife. From 40 yards downstream, by the pitch and power of the squeal, I can tell exactly what has shown up in her pan—whether it is a plinker, a plonker, or a rare, nerve-shattering growler.

If you haven't already guessed, a plinker is a very small nugget just big enough to pick up in the fingers which makes a musical little "plink" when dropped against the in-sloping wall of her gold pan. The medium nugget makes a deeper but very melodious "plonk"; while the big nugget (after about the third cleaning pass) can actually be heard "growling" beneath the sand against the base of the pan—even before you see it!

Where my wife picked up the plinker and plonker bit is obvious, but the growler tag is legitimate and goes back to Forty-niner days. Georgetown, on the Mother Lode north of Placerville, in the old days

was originally known as Growlertown because of the early profusion of "growlers" found in the discovery panning.

With us, river bank sniping—the small time panning of gold dug out of bedrock crevices, from under boulders, tree roots, etc.,—is strictly a vacation fun project. There is something about it that gets to you.

There is a strange magic to finding your first good nugget. Against the wet, swirling cloud of drab sand it suddenly beams with a steady yellow evening star glow. Understandably, the Mejicanos call them "chispas" or "sparks." Your discovery may actually be worth only a couple of bucks, but right then you wouldn't swap it for a "C" note.

Oddly enough, from that time on you'll rarely be fooled by shiny mica or glittering pyrite in your pan again—you've passed your test; you are an old-timer!

Chasing the yellow rainbow is probably worse than golf or fishing, but, unless you really get hooked, the cost of equipment and play is a whole lot less. All you need is a gold pan, and around-home items like a pinch bar, a foxhole shovel or big garden trowel, a long shanked thin screw driver (with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of the end bent at right angles and pointed to clean out crevices), an assortmⁿt

Al Morton, a professional photographer and adventurer from Salt Lake City, Utah, illustrates the proper gold panning posture. He took the photograph in the Mother Lode Country.



Authors' wife displays gold necklace made from nuggets she panned. Weekend gold panning is becoming a popular family recreation throughout the West. Author uses sluice box in the Yuba River (lower photo) where the scenery is as rewarding as the discovering of gold.

of old stirring and tablespoons, a bucket, whisk broom, old clothes—and a little know how.

Because of its extreme weight—16 to 18 times as heavy as water—any hunk of gold big enough to see acts like it's alive if there is any motion whatever in its environment, and will dig like a gopher for the bottom. Watching an inanimate object act this way is almost spooky. This weight peculiarity is the whole "why-for" of the gold pan, and the basic secret of where to look when hunting placer.

The technique of panning can be gleaned from books, or by watching—and flattering—an old-timer with his feet in a gold-country river; but actually there are only two simple basics to master. The fancy footwork that looks so impressive is just the product of practice.

Fill your pan three quarters full of gravel. Holding firmly level, submerge it beneath a few inches of water on to a flat rock or sand bench, and stir with one hand until the bubbles stop and you've got a gooey mess. Then, still holding the pan level, raise it above water and shake horizontally with a very short, firm stroke, alternating two or three times between a reciprocating and circular pattern. This first step sends the gold to the bottom of the pan, and in the more reputable camps is called "putting your baby to bed." Pour out the water.

Fill your pan with water again and while gently shaking right and left, slowly tilt the pan away from you to about 15 degrees.

Try to visualize what the water would have been like in flood stage, what projection it was bouncing off of, where it would eddy. This will give you pointers on where to look.

As a rule for elevation, a search zone is from waterline to about 15 feet above waterline; but there are exceptions, such as sharp bends, changes of flow directions—or your wife's E.S.P! After you get started, don't waste time drooling for the big caches of raw gold you imagine are in the bottoms of the deep river pools. With rare exceptions, they are just not there. It cost me over \$4000 for diving gear and trip costs, and weeks under water to find this out. This is particularly true of V-shaped canyons. A little reflection will show that the greatest water pressure—and flood stage kick—is at the point of the V. So the sand, gravel and gold is thrown up and out, on to the rough sides, where the heavy shore turbulence (and less water pressure) exists. You can illustrate this by dumping your coffee grounds in the kitchen sink, and trying to scoop them down the drain with a single pot of water poured from one

Then slowly raise and lower the "sloping" lip of the pan just above and just below water level. That's all there is to it. The water runs in and out, and the shape of the pan is such that the outflow takes off some top sand each trip, leaving heavy objects behind.

Panning is just repeated *alternating* of steps One and Two. You can practice in 10 inches of water in a tub, using driveway sand and gravel, and seven slightly flattened BBs confiscated from a neighbor kid with an air gun. When you can pick all the BBs out of the last of the sand in the pan, with your bare fingers, you are ready for the rivers—where you can find out for yourself what the second step is called!

Placer gold is sparse grains of yellow metal weathered out of the high, ancient mother rock (which was eroded eons ago) and, gathered by gullies and streams, pushed down the rivers toward the sea by flood waters. Sand and gravel, being only about twice as heavy as water, whirl and churn in the flood currents and kick and slap the gold along much further than it would move by water action alone. So each year there are new goodies hidden — often in different places.

Airplanes drop when they hit turbulence—mainly because there is no lift for their wings in spinning air. Gold does exactly the same thing in water. So the place to look is behind (downstream of) big rocks, on the inside of bends, and in narrow bedrock crevices—any place where the flood waters would spin, or be momentarily still in their rush downstream. Be sure to clean the last two inches of sand from such places thoroughly, sweep the bedrock, and spoon the sweepings into your bucket.



location. The pattern you see may help in your search.

Camping gear is a matter of choice and experience, but three additional panning items should not be forgotten. They are a good magnet, your "bragging bottle" to carry your gold in, and a small, two egg, sheet iron fry pan. Find a small empty polyethylene (hair goo) bottle into which you can loosely drop the magnet, and cut off all but the bottom four inches. About half way through your panning, you should begin to see a lot of black sands showing. These are mainly grains of magnetite, a common, heavy iron ore. Fill your pan with water, set it on a level spot, and (with the magnet inside) swish the bottle around the pan just above the sand. All the loose magnetic black sand will jump in clusters to your bottle. Lift out of pan, submerge in about two inches of flat river water, and jerk out the magnet. (I tie a string to mine.) That way you don't have to clean your magnet, it retains its full force; and you cut final clean-up panning by a good half. Some people use a plastic sack, but I prefer the stiffer polyethylene. There

are prospectors who will tell you to save your black sand—"it's fabulously rich in microscopic gold"—but they always seem to be the ones who need to borrow a little bacon and flap-jack flour.

Gold nuggets and colors in a glass bottle full of water are something to see, as the water magnifies them. Bragging bottles are a matter of whim and fancy, but the smaller your bottle, the better your loot looks. Always use a bottle with a screw top—I like a little 30-day vitamin bottle I can carry in my pocket; but my pan-happy spouse prefers a small cologne bottle with a wide flaring bottom, tied on a string around her neck. Since bragging bottles are a status symbol in the river camps, of far more importance than even a shiny new pickup, you can understand the choice.

When you first find your gold it may appear dull, even distinctly rusty in color. A quick way to burnish it up is to dump it in the clean, small fry pan, and heat it dry to a good scorching hot. Remove from the stove, let it cool a bit, and then dribble in about a cup of vinegar. Bring to a rolling boil for three or four minutes, and your loot will "turn to gold" before your eyes. Pour off the vinegar and gently wash with hot water. Pour off the excess water and slowly dry your gold. Care should always be used in drying gold in any pan over stove heat. If done too fast some of the last drops of water will suddenly form steam under any bunched gold and "pop!" and you'll lose some of your hard earned goodies.

This is all the refining you will need. I had a jeweler solder some of the wife's prize, odd-shaped little nuggets to a chain to make a necklace. They were originally cleaned in camp in this fashion, and are still bright and beautiful.

If the gold bug really bites, you can branch out and—like an avid fisherman—buy or make yourself all kinds of "really needed" tackle. I prefer to make my own stuff, and had a lot of spare time shop-fun building portable sluices, rockers and other gimmicks. The prize of the lot was a light, big-as-a-breadbox, weird shaped contraption I designed of rubber lined aluminum—with no moving parts but a tricky interior configuration—which for lack of a better name I call



Continued on Page 37

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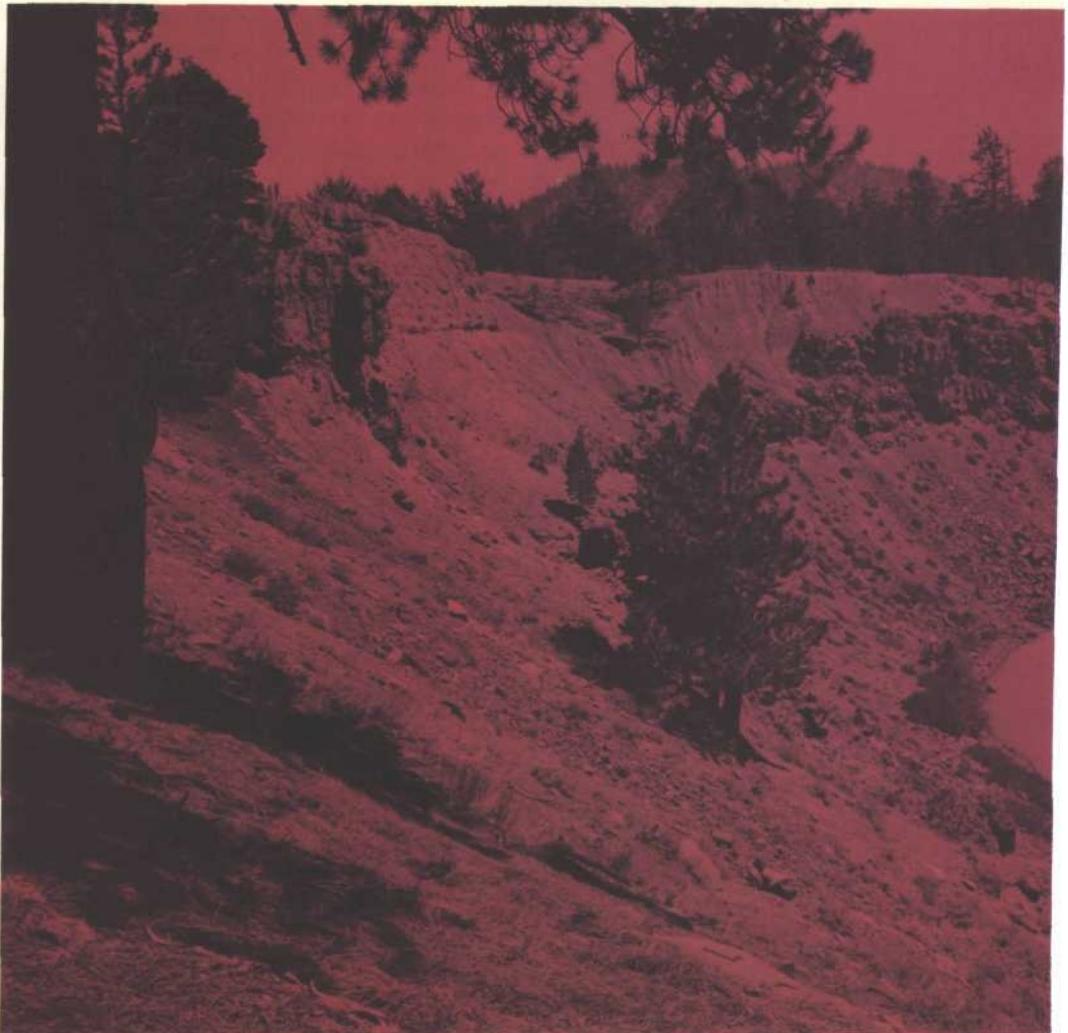
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EARTHQUAKES & VOLCANOES

by T. H. Hagemann

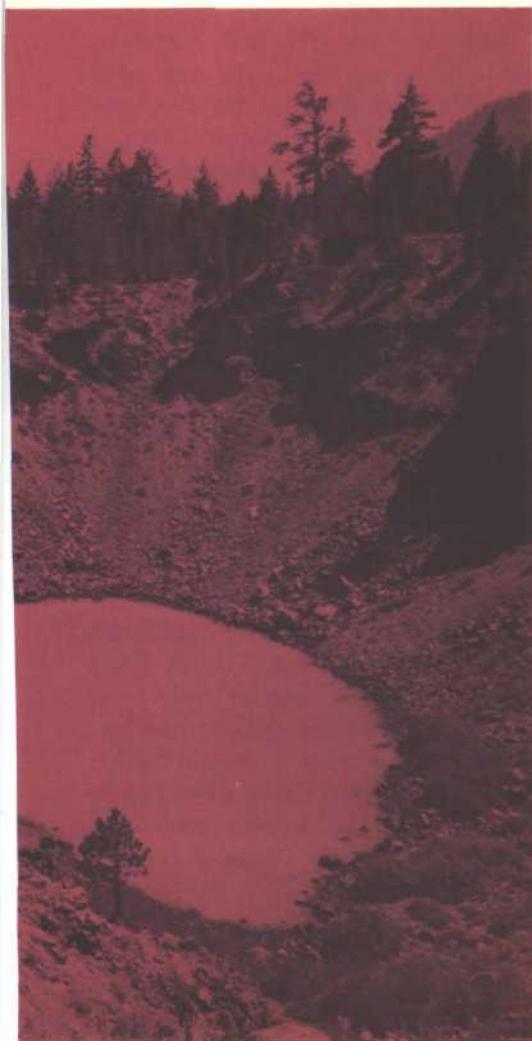


*Lake at the bottom
of a true crater
in the Inyo National
Forest. About 600
feet across the top,
the crater narrows
down to 100 feet
at the bottom.*





*It's rather a
scary descent 55 feet
below the surface
to the bottom of
an earthquake
crack where snow
never melts.*



A FASCINATING GROUP of varied geological features is concentrated within a small area of Inyo National Forest on the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada range between Mammoth Lakes and Lee Vining, California.

The features include an earthquake fault, lakes in the bottoms of craters, an obsidian dome, a chain of pumice cones, and a strange, alkaline lake with no outlet, but with two craters and many tufa domes rising above its surface. The Sierra Nevada themselves are fault mountains, created by the uplifting of the earth's crust along a complex system of fractures.

Driving north from Bishop, California on U.S. 395 for about 40 miles, you come to Casa Diablo Hot Springs where a road to the left takes you to Mammoth Lakes. About two miles up the Ski Lift road from the village is the Mammoth Earthquake Fault.

The fault actually extends intermittently for some 22 direct miles from Mammoth Mountain to Mono Lake, but this particular, easily-reached section of it has been made available to visitors because

of several distinctive features. At this point the cleft is from 10 to 20 feet wide and from 30 to 70 feet deep. At this point also you may observe how perfectly the two walls of the crack would fit together if it were closed, since there has been no vertical displacement on this site. Therefore, this opening is technically a fissure. At other places, one side of the opening may be as much as 60 feet lower than the other, making a true fault.

There are tall, red fir trees growing from the sides of the fissure. Some of them are about 200 years old, which proves that the fault must be older, since the trees could not have started growing from its sides until the crack was opened. Indian legends tell of violent earthquakes in this area in the 1700s, long before white men arrived there.

All around you the earth's surface is covered with pumice, a frothy volcanic substance so light that it will float in water. It is full of air spaces where gas expanded when the material was spewed, still molten, from nearby craters many centuries ago.

Then you climb down into the crevice.

It is a thrilling and rather scary descent. At the top the walls are about 20 feet apart but at the bottom, less than ten. With long arms you can touch both walls while fervently hoping that the fissure will not choose that moment to come together again!

It is always cool down here, for the snow at the bottom never melts and it is said that the Indians used this place as nature's ice box for food storage. Although you are standing 55 feet below the earth's surface, the snow beneath you goes down to a depth of about 70 feet.

On your way along the bottom of the cleft, you notice steel inserts embedded in the walls. These are to enable scientists to measure any expansion or contraction of the opening. You also notice

that the sides of the crevice are not earth, but volcanic rock which, as molten lava, covered this area to a great depth thousands of years ago. On it, moss and lichen are growing. These tiny, patient plants with their weak acid will slowly break off particles of the rock in their never-ending process, over centuries, of soil building.

It is an exciting experience to have been so far inside the earth's crust, but you breathe a little easier as you climb out again.

Returning to U.S. 395 and proceeding about five miles north, turn left again onto a dirt road for five miles to reach the Inyo Crater Lakes. These are at the bottoms of two spectacular, funnel-shaped holes in the ground which are

true craters. The north crater is about 100 feet deep, the south crater a little more than 200, and each is about 600 feet across.

Sometime between 1115 and 1465 A.D., ground water seeped down and came into contact with magma or molten lava deep beneath the earth's surface. The heated water changed to steam, built up a tremendous pressure, and finally "blew its top." The explosion hurled millions of tons of rock upward and outward and, since the pressure was relieved, the molten lava did not emerge. The small lakes now in the bottoms of these craters have been formed over the years from summer rains and melting snows.

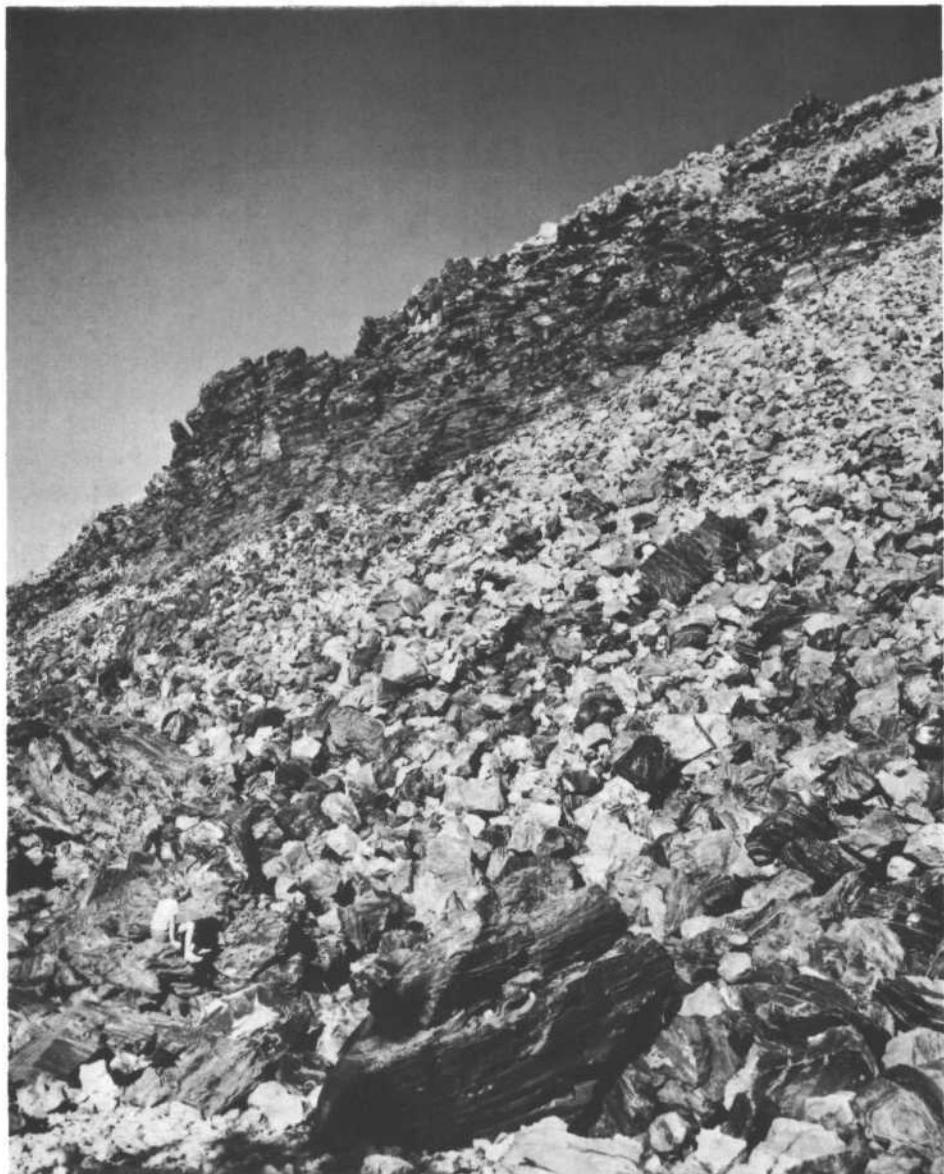
Most of the rock brought to the surface by these explosions was pumice which blankets the forest floor several feet deep for miles around. It is some of this pumice which you see at Mammoth Earthquake Fault.

In the walls of the craters may be seen various types of rock, lava, and volcanic ash, as well as some ancient logs. Radio-carbon dating has established their age to be somewhere between 450 and 850 years old.

Back to U.S. 395 and continuing north for about nine miles you again turn left on a dirt road for about one mile and come to Obsidian Dome, a huge jumble of volcanic glass about 300 feet high and a mile wide. This was formed by hot lava oozing up through a narrow neck somewhat like the stem of a mushroom, and then spreading out all around the top of the stem like a mushroom cap. The obsidian here is not all shiny black glass such as one sees at Obsidian Cliff in Yellowstone National Park; here much of it is speckled with white spots and other intrusive material.

Returning to the highway and continuing northward you will see a chain of light-colored volcanic cones dominating the landscape on your right. Although they are not true craters, these are called the Mono Craters; they are believed to have originated about 65,000 years ago. Highest of the chain is Mount Russell, elevation 9172 feet. Closer views may be had from State 120 going east, West Portal Road, and the Devil's Punchbowl road.

Some of the cones have retained their shape; in others, great columns of ob-



A child is almost invisible—lower left—on the huge jumble of volcanic glass. Obsidian Dome is 300 feet high and a mile wide.



Although not "true" craters, Mono Craters are believed to have originated about 60,000 years ago. This is a view of the Southern Coulee.

sidian arose and overtopped the pumice rims, flowing as a sticky mess onto the plains and forming a coulee.

A third step in their development is shown in The Caldera which is believed to have come about when enormous pressures beneath a coulee resulted in violent explosions, leaving a steep-sided crater about 450 feet deep and 2000 feet across.

Here again, the greater part of the material exploded was pumice, and the area is mined by a corporation which supplies this light, frothy material for many commercial purposes, from tooth powder to building blocks.

Only a few miles farther north, and overlooked by the town of Lee Vining, is Mono Lake covering an area of 10 by 14 miles. It is about 152 feet deep now, although it was much deeper and larger many years ago. First called Lake Russell after an early-day geologist, it was formed when the uplifting of the Sierra Nevada to the west caused a depression which quickly filled with melting glacier water as the Ice Age ended. The shore lines of that ancient lake are still clearly visible on nearby mountains, the highest

mark being about 770 feet above the present lake. The town of Lee Vining stands on what was the beach of Lake Russell. The evaporation of that large body of water over many years left the saline and other chemical content of the present lake, and the odd little white tufa towers showing above the surface of Mono Lake are formed by some of these minerals.

Mono Lake has no outlet, yet is constantly fed by springs and by two mountain streams — Rush and Lee Vining Creeks—although part of their water is diverted to the Los Angeles water supply.

In the lake are two islands, one black and one white; both are of volcanic origin. The black cone of Negit is probably more recent; Paoha's beds of lake sediment appear to show that it was once under water. Paoha has hot springs of sulphur water and, in the center of its cinder cone, a heart-shaped lake.

For a weekend outing and a fascinating lesson in geological phenomena few places in the world can compare to this small area in California's Inyo National Forest. □

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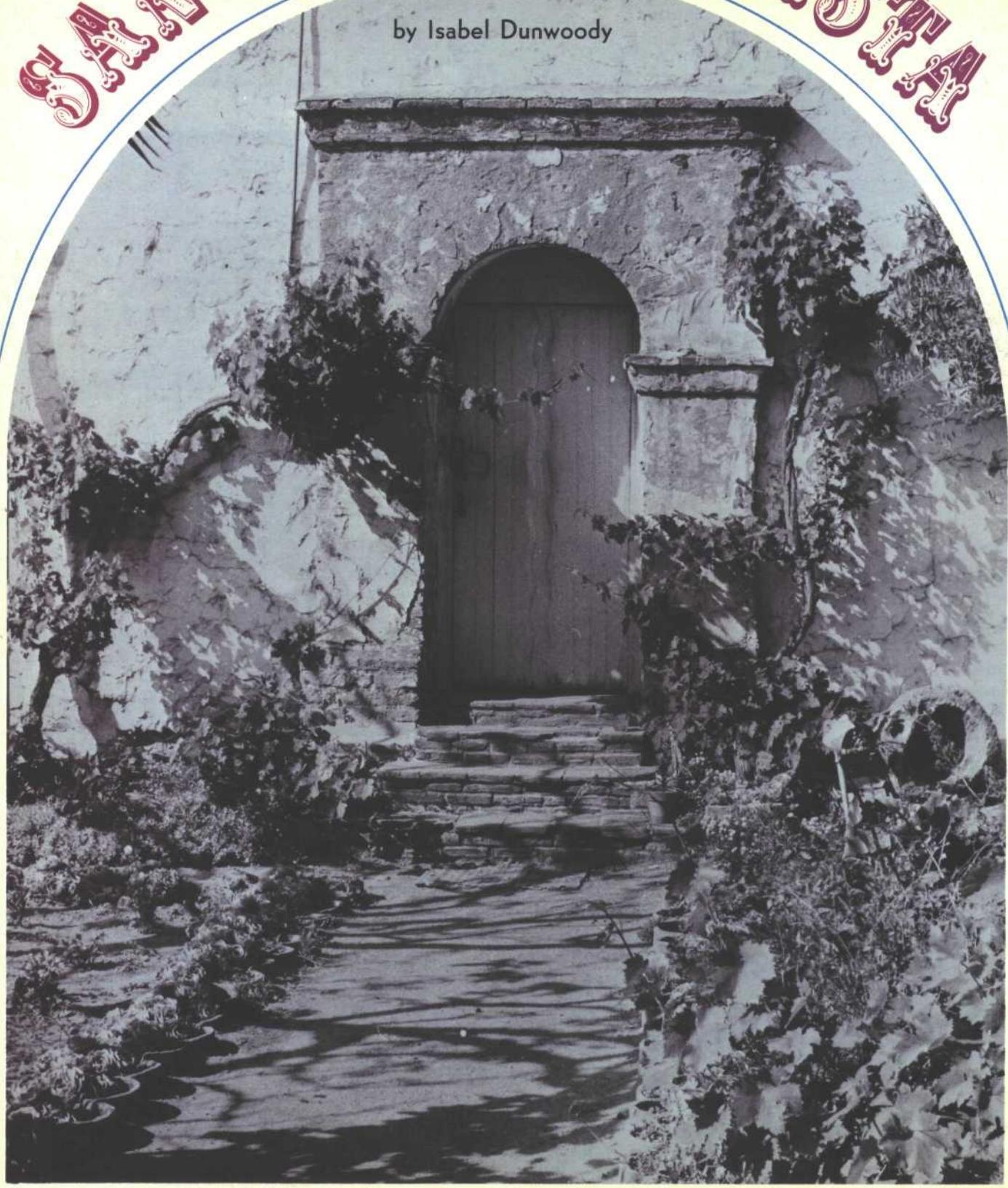
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SHAW YUAN BAUHINIA

by Isabel Dunwoody



JUST THREE miles east of California's main coastal artery, U.S. 101, between Gilroy and Salinas, lulled by the sound of honey bees in its many beautiful gardens, the quaint little town of San Juan Bautista appears to be catnapping in the smog-free sunshine.

While all of San Juan Bautista is alive with Americana, the area designated as the State Historic Monument is best known for its history within a city of history. Here time stands still. Once just a large open space in front of the old Mission, the plaza gradually acquired The Castro House, The Zanetta House or Plaza Hall, the Plaza Stable and the Plaza Hotel. They represent three periods of California History; Spanish, Mexican, and early American.

A good place to begin your tour into the past is the Plaza Hotel. Helen Hunt Jackson, creator of Ramona, enjoyed the hotel's gardens. Civil War General Sherman signed the register and many financiers and cattlemen made it their headquarters. Climbing the stairs in these early day commuter's footsteps, you see their rooms, typically furnished with ornate dresser and highback quilt-covered bed.

In 1813 the hotel was a one-story adobe barracks for Spanish soldiers guarding Mission San Juan Bautista. When Angelo Zanetta bought it, he added a second story. Once a chef in New Orleans, his insistence on the finest wines and juiciest beefsteaks made the hotel a must on the stagecoach line between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Since San Juan was the market place for California ranchers to sell their thousands of cattle, steaks were no problem to come by. They cost \$1.00 a piece.

That the hotel was a going concern speaks for itself in the records. One item reads, "Loaned by the Hotel Clerk to Daniel Harris, (one of the wealthy merchants of the town) \$1,000.00 in cash." A day or two later the entry was marked paid. And if they didn't have credit cards in those days, they had credit. Also from the records, "May 25th, 1872, Brotherton, 2 bottles claret, \$1.00; 1 small bottle whiskey, \$.50; Paid, cabbage \$.50."

At one time there were seven Concord stage lines operating in and out of San Juan. Stagecoaches no longer dash up to Zanetta's Inn, but some of them are

displayed in the 1874 Plaza Livery Stable Museum across the street. So are various other horse drawn carriages, including the Eagle Fire Wagon that served San Juan in 1869.

Down the street from the Plaza Hotel is the historic General Castro House, now restored and open to the public. One of the finest examples of houses built during the Spanish era, the adobe bricks were made by the Mission Indians. The two-story house first belonged to the general who had it built as his official residence where he was Prefect of the 1st District in California until the American occupation. After secularization of the Mission in 1835, Castro established the Pueblo of San Juan. For a time the capital of the North was called San Juan de Castro.

One day an Iowa Irishman, Patrick Breen, and his family arrived in San Juan. Survivors of the ill-fated Donner Expedition in the Sierra Nevada mountains, they were destitute save for Patrick's now famous diary of the tragedy. The sympathetic people of San Juan gave

them food and clothing. Not to be outdone, the General put them up in his fine house, rent free. When the cry of gold echoed through the town, the Breen's eldest son answered it. He returned home with \$12,000 in gold. The Breens purchased their benefactor's house with the green-railed balcony and four acres of San Juan's richest land.

The part adobe, part clapboard, ornate yellow building with its startling pink trim, green shutters, facing the Mission is the Angelo Zanetta house. The name plate on the double door can still be seen.

In 1868 the hotel proprietor answered San Juan's long need for a public hall. During the mission period there had been a nunnery by the Mission, used to house young, single Indian girls until they married. When it was no longer needed, the dormitory crumbled into disuse and was used to store hay. Zanetta salvaged the best of the adobe bricks for the outer walls of the Hall's first floor. He added a second story of wood for the "swinging" ball room. Many a lovely señorita was whisked around its dance floor.



San Juan Bautista was the fifteenth and largest of the Franciscan Missions. It is still in use today for services and weddings. One of the three picturesque entrances (opposite page) in the verdant Mission garden. Adobe was made by the Indians.



Plaza Hall is one of several historic buildings around the Mission Plaza open to the public. Other buildings are a livery stable, hotel and several shops. Authentic Spanish, Mexican and early American objects are on display in the buildings.

When Angelo Zanetta tired of running his hotel, he made the lower floor of Plaza Hall his private residence, now open to enjoy, furnished with authentic eighteenth century furniture. Margaret Zanetta's wedding dress is in one bedroom, black button shoes and a black lace dress is in another. A white long-sleeved nightie waits on the bed. You become so caught up with this long ago era, you almost feel an intruder, or that you might pass one of the Zanettas in the hall.

The old sounds of the Plaza itself have become less than whispers through the years. Once they were far more. On Sundays it overflowed with carretas and saddle horses, waiting for their occupants to attend mass. Squealing Indian children, wards of the Missions, ran barefoot. It was parade grounds for General Castro's straight-backed Spanish soldiers, bugles sounded, drums beat. Occasionally there were bull and bear fights. A picture of one of these bloody fights is

painted on the wall back of the bar in the Plaza Hotel. And there was romance, like the time the vaquero Tony stole a Spanish señorita right out from under watchful eyes, without Plaza bystanders realizing it was an elopement.

To the back of the plaza and running along the Mission are vineyards with great clusters of grapes thick among the leaves. The padres no longer tend them or make the wine. Wine is made in the Almaden Wineries across the way. You can sip it in their wine tasting room overlooking the beautiful sprawling valley. A part of the famous old Camino Real runs along the side of the Plaza and beside the church. Once crowded on Sundays with chattering people coming to Mass, it is now as quiet as the Mission cemetery where 4300 Mission Indians sleep in sacred, unmarked graves. Their names can be still read in Mission records.

Popeloutechom is what the Cumulos Indians called the church that was home

to them, the 15th and largest of the Franciscan Missions. It still serves San Juan today. Bricks for the floor were made by the Indians, under the tutelage of the padres, from the surrounding adobe clay. The interesting designs you see are wild animal tracks made while the clay was drying in the sunshine.

When your tour of the historic buildings is finished take time to stroll in the town itself and sit under sprawling gnarled old oaks in the grassy park. The shops are on Third Street. Most have flower-filled water troughs in front and benches for visitors.

A town doesn't become a Monument without a struggle. An earthquake and fires tried to take their toll of San Juan. A railroad and the freeway passed it by. But with determination, hard work and faith the residents of San Juan Bautista gradually made their town a city of history; quaint and charming — a place where thousands of tourists relive the glorious past of California. □

Exploring **Southeastern Oregon**

by Marjorie O'Hara

SOUTHEASTERN OREGON is high mesa country tinted with sagebrush and lava, split by chasms of ethereal beauty and encircled by barren mountains that look like pastel murals painted in the sky. It is country of spectacular scenery, robust history and few people. It is often overlooked in travel literature, or, if mentioned at all, described as a "wasteland pierced by gruelling stretches of road." This is an injustice probably perpetrated by persons who drive through instead of into this land of open space.

Using Jordan Valley as a hub, you can explore the back roads spreading into the hinterland as the spokes of a wheel. A friendly wide spot on U.S. 95, one of

the main routes between Mexico and Canada, Jordan Valley has a population of 200, two motels, two cafes, several service stations, two grocery stores and a gift shop boasting the largest collection of period pharmaceutical equipment and medicine bottles in the Pacific Northwest. For 53 years the shop served as office and pharmacy of Dr. W. W. Jones, the only doctor within 100 miles.

Southeastern Oregon was claimed by

miners in 1863. It was rich in gold, lead, silver and zinc. Ruby City and Silver City were boom towns just over the border in Idaho. In 1869 Con Shea drove Texas longhorns in and cattlemen followed. Then, the miners, cattlemen and U.S. Cavalry joined to subdue the Bannock and Piute Indians. Pedro Arriola and Luis Yturraspe came from Spain to join Jose Navarro and Antonio Azcuenga, who had found space in which to

***I**daho's Silver City is off the beaten track and therefore the semi-ghost town has few visitors. A fine museum is run by the town's caretaker and guide. In the 1860's it had a population of 10,000 people. Today there are only seven residents.*



run sheep, and, the community of Jordan Valley—still known as The Home of the Basques—was established on the banks of Jordan Creek.

In Jordan Valley, many of the old-timers will tell you they have never been to Leslie Gulch because it is a "rough drive," but that they hear it is "sure something." They are right, on both counts.

Leaving U.S. 95 about 20 miles north of Jordan Valley, turn west across the rolling hills until the top of one roll simply falls away, and below is the rocky entrance to a gulch that continues some 10 miles to the Owyhee River. A twisting stretch of road known as "Runaway

Hill" brings you to the bottom of the narrow canyon where pinnacles and towers of fiery brick-red, beige, yellow and orange, with sandwiched strata of pastel greens and violet, soar up to 2000 feet above the stream bed. As the sun moves, it is like riding through a sizzling kaleidoscope.

Twenty miles south of Jordan Valley, South Mountain dominates the skyline as it rises 8320 feet into the sky. The road to the top follows a stream of clear, cold water splashing through groves of quaking aspen. Choke cherry trees bloom here in the spring. So does mountain larkspur, penstemon and wild peonies, and the grass is high and lush. The ground that

gets water in this country is covered with verdant growth; everything else is quite brown.

At 7000 feet elevation you will find what was a large mine. Ore was shipped by ox team to Winnemucca, Nevada, then by railroad to San Francisco where it was loaded on boats and shipped to Banshee, Wales, to be smelted. South Mountain's mines supported Bullion City, a community where 2500 people lived and worked. At the top you will find a lookout station—and a view of southeastern Oregon, southwestern Idaho and Nevada.

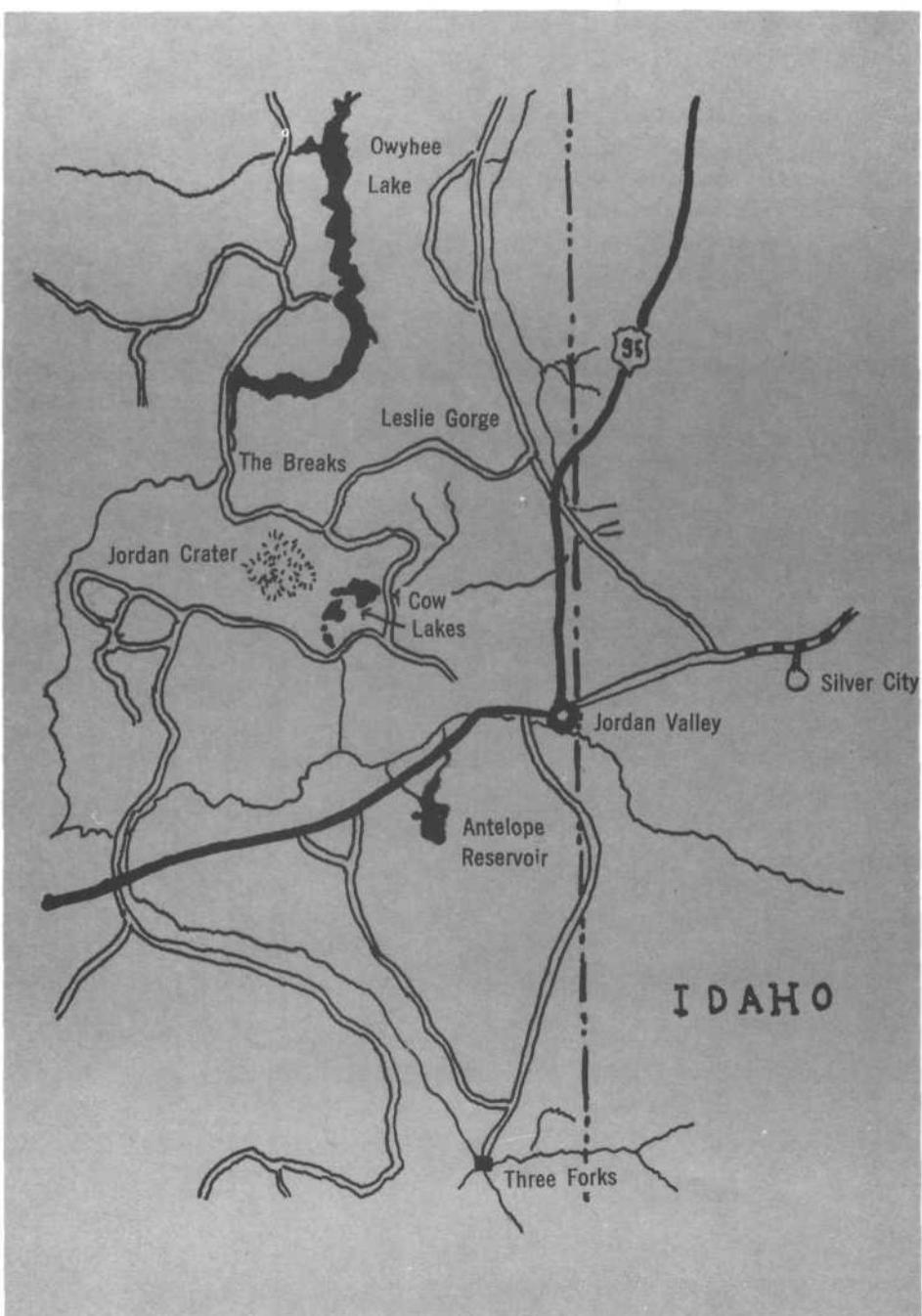
The spoke of the wheel leading east from Jordan Valley takes you to Silver City, Idaho, where the wind whips the snow in the winter and the sun beats on jagged gray rocky ridges in the summer. This was a mining town of 10,000 persons in the late 1860s. Today it is probably the biggest, the highest (6176 feet elevation) and the quietest ghost town in the nation.

There are approximately four square blocks of old buildings, all privately owned, to explore and there is a fine museum in the clapboard school where, when he isn't doing anything else, the curator leans out the second story window and watches over the town through binoculars. He is also the caretaker of Silver City, and one of the six or seven residents.

Silver City is off the beaten tourist track and has few visitors, except for the one night each year when the Cattlemen's Association holds a bash in the old Masonic Hall. The population zooms to 2000, until the bar closes and the music stops, then all is peaceful for another year.

To reach Forks of the Owyhee, south of Jordan Valley, traverse 37 miles of flat, dry land where sagebrush sticks are used to build an occasional corral and where juniper logs make sturdy all-weather houses. Mail boxes loom huge at the crossroads because the few people who live out here do most of their buying "out of the catalogue."

A cattle loading chute and a gate are at the edge of the plateau. A good long look away, and way down below, the three forks of the Owyhee River come together to flow north into the Snake and then into the Columbia River.





The Owyhee River winds through the Three Forks of the cathedral-like walls of rock. The silence of this isolated area is broken only by the songs of birds—and your own splashing in the cool river water.

If you take the road that zig-zags down the cliff, passes the old log cabin in a cow camp, and the older rock shelter built half underground, you can wade up the shallow, slow-flowing north fork to where it is protected by cathedral-like walls of rock that rise straight up. The hush of centuries is broken only by the song of little birds busy building mud nests in cracks and crevices — and by much splashing.

To the west of Jordan Valley you cross rock-strewn desert to skirt the lava fields of Jordan Craters, on what was the Old Military Road between western Oregon and Idaho. Here you find another ghost town, Danner, and the grave of J.B. Charbonneau, son of Sacajawea, of Lewis and Clark expedition fame.

You can't miss the crater, a huge, black hole where a mountain top once stood. The hot lava that spewed out of it less than 500 years ago covers acre upon acre of flat land below. When you walk on this lava field you see tubes and tunnels and often there is a weird hollow

sound under the broken sharp rocks that cut into your shoes. In other places, the flow looks smooth, like hard charcoal-turned-mud. Approach the blow holes with caution because the overhang on some of these abysmal depths is terribly thin.

Then, for what well may be the highlight of your exploration. A half-hour drive from the Jordan Crater takes you to the Breaks in the Owyhee, which have been likened to the Grand Canyon. In the late afternoon, when the sun is red-gold on the horizon, these breaks are one of the most magnificent sights in the world.

From the edge of the plateau, you look down and across a fantasy land of Arabian castles, sleeping stone monsters, spires and towers, all tinged in the spectrum of muted colors. And the Owyhee River is a shimmering thread far below.

Southeastern Oregon, "a wasteland pierced by grueling stretches of road." We don't think you'll go along with that, certainly not after you have explored it. □



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RELICS OF THE RIDGE ROUTE

Continued from Page 7

bottle dumps along the Old Ridge Route. Rusty tin cans clearly dotted the barren slopes that formerly were covered with the protective growth of brush. Partly exposed bottles of green, amber and purple glass beckoned to us through the crisp mountain air with fingers of reflected sunlight.

As we were about to descend the ridge, a shout of glee came from my wife as she examined a coin, tarnished with

years of exposure. She had just found an 1899 Indian head penny. "A lucky penny!" she cried, the excitement shining in her eyes as she waved it in the air.

Indeed it was, for within minutes we had gathered several of the beautiful and imperfect old bottles. Taking full advantage of the excitement that comes with finding "old-timers" on top of the ground, shouts of "Oh, look at this!" and, "Here's another one!" filled the air as we moved back and forth across the hill.

Then a stillness settled over the wash as experienced eyes began surveying the

area, gauging the angle of the slope and noting the depressions. Almost as if on command the abrasive sounds of steel against sand filtered through the cool air.

A shelf was started across the slope, then another. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed before enough soil was removed to get a good cross section of the dump's depth. In the process, a few more bottles were found, some discarded, others carefully set aside. The surface material went down about four inches. Twelve to fourteen inches below that was another layer of rusty cans about six or eight inches thick.

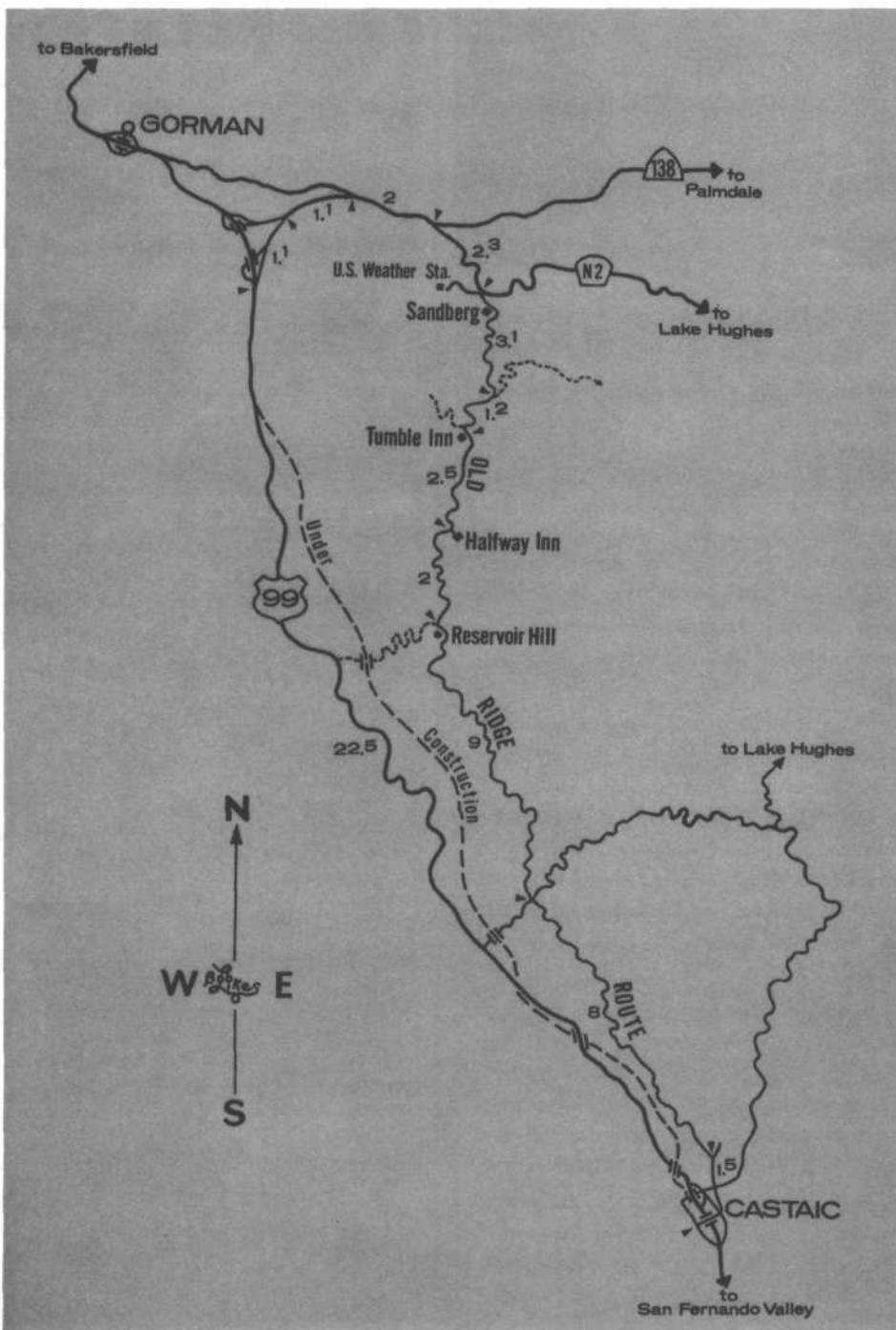
Slowly we started shoveling away the small wall in front of us, back filling the shelf as we moved up the wash. There were more shouts of encouragement as each bottle was carefully freed from the earth and examined for age.

The afternoon sun moved across the cloudless sky and all too soon we were approaching the top. For the next twenty minutes we were just shoveling the sandy soil. That was it. We had dug completely through the old dump.

Slipping back into my jacket, I was suddenly aware of tired muscles. A quick glance at the sun riding low on the horizon told us it was time to go.

Driving south, we came to a lonely spot on the Old Ridge Route where it is possible, in a manner of speaking, to look into the past, present and future. For it is here, several hundred feet below, that the present Ridge Route snakes its way through the canyon, busy with the flow of today's traffic. Between the two, huge earth-moving equipment awaited tomorrow's task of building the future divided freeway.

As we paused to view this impressive sight, a nagging thought kept creeping into the back of my mind. Why were we able to locate one of the hidden dumps that so many times before were denied us? Was this an act of being remembered after the third generation Ridge Route opened and the Old Ridge Route was completely forgotten? For how many times when asked by friends where we found these priceless bottles, will we answer, "They're relics of the Old Ridge Route—the first one built way back in 1914." Our truck slowly moved away as darkness gathered around the ridge. □



PAN HAPPY

Continued from Page 25

my "rocker-pan." It will catch the finest gold, but requires knee deep water to work it; and with it I can pan eight times as much gravel as normal. But for the final cleanup I still have to empty it into the exact type of gold pan the old '49ers used. There must be a moral there somewhere!

The hunting areas of the fun-gold panner are much wider than commonly realized. The Mother Lode is best known, but California gold can be panned from Lytle Creek and Holcomb Valley in the San Bernardino area to the wide spread flanks of the Marble Mountains west of Redding and north of Weaverville. There are good campgrounds, excellent fishing—and shiny bragging bottles—along the Klamath and Smith rivers in the northwest part of the state.

There are a lot of good creeks (like Tin Cup) that feed the Rogue and Illinois Rivers in southern Oregon, and the scenery and gold of central and northern Idaho should not be overlooked. (Up until about 1936 more gold was taken out of the narrow Boise Basin—about 30 miles east of Boise—than had been taken out of the *whole* Territory of Alaska!)

If you try your hand along the rivers of southwestern Montana, watch your third and fourth cleaning pass, for gem quality beryl (rubies and sapphires) occasionally show up in lucky pans. I've seen some beauties plucked out of that area.

So, to pull a switch on an old saying, "You digs your gravel, and takes your choice!"

These hints should help in your search for "color" and nuggets, but they will not fill your bottle the first day—that takes sweat and practice. I'll guarantee you, however, that if you want to temporarily lose your load of civilization's worries, there is no quicker way than trying to outsmart the river and swipe its goodies. Then you too can casually admit—in an offhand way—that you "had a pretty fair day"—and pass your bragging bottle around for campfire "oohs" and "ahs." That's Soul Status, brother. So welcome to our pan-happy, "lost" generation. □



After years of panning for gold, Ken Marquiss has developed his own optional equipment. A floating, tandem wheelbarrow (above) is for moving camp along the river, the rockers fold up for transport and his "breadbox" is for bulk panning in isolated areas. Complete with pop-up tent (below) a modern-day prospector's camp has all the comforts of home—almost.



Back Country

Travel

by Bill Bryan



I have a problem and would appreciate your comments and opinions. What do you want to read about in this column? The editor thinks I am devoting too much space to straight competition and not enough to family outings and club trips.

My problem is our circle of friends is spending more and more time attending competition events just to watch their favorite drivers compete—even though they, themselves, do not. It seems that every four-wheel-drive club cruise now includes competition in one form or another. Of course, this is different than straight competition like the Baja 500 or the Mint 500. I maintain our readers are interested in both straight competition and competition during club events—as well as club activities—and that the same people attend both.

Desert Magazine each month will recognize either an individual or members of an organization who have contributed toward the preservation or conservation of our wilderness areas. We hope by presenting this award it will teach vandals and litterbugs to change their habits and enjoy and not destroy our natural resources. Please send your nominations for an individual or organization and a description of the project to Back Country Travel, Desert Magazine, Palm Desert, Calif. 92260.

Isn't getting families together what this jeeping is all about? In the early 1960s you drove all day, made camp at night, heated a can of chili and hit the sack. Today most runs end around 3 p.m., we set up camp, have a cocktail and then a community barbecue, after which the kids buzz around on their mini-bikes. But back to my problem—what do you want to see in this column?

The second Sunday of each month there is a real fun event held at Deadman's Point, a few miles east of Apple Valley on Highway 18. Four families of us from Indio recently attended the weekend event sponsored by the Hi Desert Racing Association which consists of off-racing and family fun. The kids had a ball exploring the miles of trails on their mini-bikes . . . be sure they have helmets. If you don't have a fun campout you aren't trying. There is electricity, water and clean rest rooms.

While there we spent several hours with Chuck Coyle, of Baja Boot fame, and Rod Fish, of San Bernardino (and their families). At the July 13 Deadman's Point meeting there were 53 cars running in four classes. First and second winners were: Production Class Buggies, Al Rogers and Burl York; Four Wheel Drive, Sandy Cone and Bill Bryan; Experimental Rail, Rick James and Lloyd Heard; Production Rail, Richard Koch and Jerry Olivera; Powder Puff, Donna Carlton and Carol Brown.

A big family event for the month of November is the First National Sand Championships to be held during the four-day Thanksgiving holiday, November 27-30. The events for four-wheel-drives and dune buggies will consist of the First National Championship Sand Drag Races by the Ramblin Rods 4WD Club, the First National Championship Hill Climb, the First National Championship European Scrambles Off-Road Race. Climax will be a running to determine the National Sand Champion. There will be many perpetual trophies, including a six-footer for the "Sand King" donated by the Sand King Company of North Hollywood.

There will be daily family fun events, also, including trail rides plus many miles of play areas for the family rig. It will be held at the Dumont Dunes, 35 miles north of Baker, California. It is on the south end of Death Valley on the banks

of the Amargosa River. Other events include a free lunch, a bonus for early registration and drawing prizes. For information write to 4X4 & DBN, P. O. Box 5001, Mission Hills, Calif. 91340.

Some cats with off-road vehicles have made a trash dump out of their sand box. I am referring to the sand dunes between Palm Desert and Country Club Drive in Riverside County. I have noticed the complete disregard for safety by a majority of the drivers racing over these sand dunes. They do not have a flag high above their vehicles and few have roll bars. We have already had one death in this area. Also, there are so many piles of trash it is difficult to drive over the dunes. It's about time the careless get smart or the area will be closed off. Maybe the responsible drivers can educate the crazy cats.

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BACK TRAIL TO LA PLATA

Continued from page 13

once lived first drew my attention to the old mine workings. Its roof and upper floor had caved in, burying whatever might have been inside beneath a mass of broken logs and shingles. Not far up the canyon there was a small log cabin occupied by a family of pack rats while rusting cook stoves and crumbling foundations marked places where other buildings had once stood.

An abandoned air compressor and a hand-cranked drilling machine lay where they had been left on a mine dump. Just beyond a bend in the canyon two log cabins stood guard over a glory hole where three inclined shafts had been sunk from a common opening. All were caving but tiny cracks proved they were still inhabited by small animals. A blue grouse flew from a pine as I crossed the creek.

The next bend of the canyon revealed the townsite itself. Where the main street had once straddled the creek there was now a large beaver dam reflecting the white barked Aspens beyond. As I watched a beaver move silently across its still surface, leaving only a widening ripple to mark its passing. Two cabins stood by the edge of the small lake, having withstood the test of time. Several large waste dumps, among them the old Sundown, lined the canyon sides. As I walked among the old cabins and waste dumps with their discarded relics of yesterday I could picture La Plata as it had been. It took only a little imagination to make believe the chuckling of the streams was the rumble of ore wagons climbing the gulch or that the wind whistling through the pines was the siren call from the saloons along Main Street.

The pines were casting long shadows as I started back down the quiet canyon and a chill wind coming from off Monte Cristo reminded that winter snows would soon lie deep at the old camp again. I knew the few remaining cabins would not survive many more winters. But for me La Plata still recalled memories of the days when it promised treasure to its miners and fame to Cache County. □

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FREE CIRCULAR: Hard to find old-time country "hoe-down" fiddle records. Uncle Jim O'Neal, Box AD, Arcadia, Calif. 91006.

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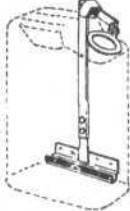
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Woman's Viewpoint

Calendar of Western Events

Information on Western Events must be received at DESERT two months prior to their scheduled date.

AUGUST 30, ANNUAL FIESTA AND BAR-B-QUE, sponsored by the Morongo Valley, California Chamber of Commerce. Contests, entertainment, etc.

AUGUST 30, CENTENIAL 4WD SAFARI, Ely, Nevada. Tour of ghost towns. Write to Mrs. Lloyd Phillips, P. O. Box 571, Ely, Nevada 89301.

SEPTEMBER 13 & 14, SANTA YNEZ VALLEY ROCK CLUB SHOW in connection with Solvang Danish Days, Solvang, Calif. Admission free.

SEPTEMBER 26-28, FIRST ANNUAL ALL INDIAN POW-WOW, Yucca Valley (San Bernardino County), Calif. Sponsored by Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital, and patterned after the Flagstaff show. Events include parades, dances, Indian rodeo, etc. Write P. O. Box 638, Yucca Valley, Calif. 92284.

SEPTEMBER 27, ANNUAL ROCK SWAP sponsored by the Fresno Gem and Mineral Society, Kearney Park, Fresno, California.

SEPTEMBER 27 & 28, GAMBLERS RODEO sponsored by the Lake Tahoe Hi/Lo's 4-Wheel Drive Club, Tahoe Valley, California. Excellent spectator event. Participants and public invited. Write to Hi/Lo Club, South Lake Tahoe, Calif. 95705.

SEPTEMBER 27 & 28, GEM AND MINERAL SHOW sponsored by Motherlode Mineralites of Auburn, Calif. Admission free.

OCTOBER 2-12, EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GEM SHOW of the Fresno Gem and Mineral Society, Fresno Fair Grounds. Write Judy Geringer, 3905 E. Dwight Way, Fresno, Calif. 93702.

OCTOBER 4 & 5, PROSPECTORS CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Second Annual Convention, Burton's Tropico Gold Mine, Rosamond, Calif. Adult competition with metal detectors, childrens' events, prizes, displays. Write Norman Oliver, P. O. Box 613, Bell, Calif. 90201.

OCTOBER 10, 11 & 12, ANNUAL ANZA-BORREGO DESERT FESTIVAL, Borrego Springs, Calif. Activities opening the winter season in the area.

OCTOBER 18 & 19, WONDERS OF GEM-LAND sponsored by the Northrop Recreation Gem and Mineral Club, Northrop Recreation Center, 12626 Chadron Street, Hawthorne, Calif. Free admission. Programs, dealers, exhibits and working demonstrations. Write Orville Johnson, 11831 S. Casimir, Ave., Inglewood, Calif. 90303.

If you want to remove film on old glass, try leaving the item in a solution of equal parts of water and vinegar for half an hour. If that doesn't work try a solution of one part muriatic acid to nine parts water. Wash thoroughly afterwards.

CAMP HAMBURGER AND BEANS

1 pound hamburger (more if desired)

1 large can small red beans

1 small can tomatoes

1 onion—green pepper and garlic if desired

Cook hamburger and onion a few minutes. Add red beans and tomatoes. Cook until mixture has thickened.

A YUCAIPA READER

First, let me tell you we enjoy Desert and it seems to get better all the time. If it says anything is so in Desert, I am inclined to believe it. However, two of my friends and I have tried the prickly pear jelly recipes in the last June and July issues and cannot get it to jell. We followed directions implicitly. Could the ladies tell us what might be wrong?

MRS. W. A. HIERACH,
Quartzsite, Arizona.

Editor's Note: When dealing with articles, lost mines, etc., I can usually check the statements to see if they are factual. However, not being a cook I cannot comment. Would Mrs. Maurine Knight, Black Canyon, Arizona, and Mrs. Harold Knuze, who sent in the recipes, reply to Mrs. Hierach's letter, and help your uncooked editor out of this prickly dilemma?

This is your column, ladies, so if you have any ideas you would like to share with others please send them in, attention Viewpoint.

Fossil Bolts . . .

Often I have wondered why a rockhound is as he is . . . a lover of the open places, searching for an unusual agate, a purple bottle or an old gun . . . anything unusual and old. Most of us go in for collecting fossils of any kind, waiting only for a skillful blow of a rock hammer to reveal its beauty.

My earliest recollection of hunting rocks was when I was about six years of age when my mother took me down the road after a cloudburst to hunt for agates. She showed me just what to look for and where to find them. My father was convinced that I would no doubt find a lost gold mine some day as I was always looking down . . . looking for something unusual.

Through the years I have found old guns, Indian tools, axe heads and arrowheads and other "precious" things, but no gold mine.

When our astronauts told of leaving parts of their gear in outer space recently, I was reminded of an article that appeared in a western outdoor magazine some 20 years ago



telling about "fossil bolts" being found in Washington, Oregon and Montana.

Shortly after I went on a hunting trip into eastern Oregon with Mr. Forbes, who at the time ran an agate shop on the outskirts of Bend, Oregon. We stayed overnight with the Forbes and during the evening the conversation got around to the article on "fossil bolts." Mr. Forbes was much interested in the story but had never seen one. Next morning we drove out into the rugged country some 70 miles east of Bend. During the afternoon I picked up a small but heavy stone and walked over to ask Mr. Forbes what it might be. He said, "maybe it's a fossil bolt" and we had a good laugh. But when we laid it on a rock and tapped it with his hammer, you can imagine our surprise when out fell a perfect, threaded bolt!

Through the years I have kept the fossil bolt and often wondered if anyone in California has ever found such a thing and if so, do they have any theories as to how they were formed? The one I found was in rugged country far from the beaten path. If anyone would care to write about such a find, I would like to hear from them.

M. E. HURD,
Buena Park, California.

Good Slogan . . .

As a subscriber to Desert Magazine and a man who spent a year of his boyhood on the desert near El Mirage dry lake, I have noted with interest your efforts to encourage keeping the desert clean. Although I no longer live within striking distance of it, I still feel that

Letters to the Editor

Letters requesting answers must include stamped self-addressed envelope.

those who wish to protect its beauty should be encouraged.

As I drive past a park in Arlington, Virginia, I have for some time been taken by a simple sign, carved in wood beneath the name of the park. It says, "Take nothing but pictures. Leave nothing but tracks."

It seems to me that this is very well put. It would make a good slogan for a four-wheel-drive group or for any desert area. It might even be a good slogan for your magazine.

HUGH M. PEASE,
McLean, Virginia.

Note From Nell . . .

Thank you for your kind letter. It is nice to know that your readers still inquire about me.

I hope to leave tomorrow on a long-planned tour of Alaska and the Canadian Northwest. I am just head-over-heels busy at the moment—and expect to be up until the very moment of departure, so won't have any time to even think about writing anything.

Thank you so much for thinking of me.

NELL MURBARGER,
Costa Mesa, California.

Editor's Note: In response to many inquiries from readers about Nell Murbarger we contacted her at her home in Costa Mesa. Miss Murbarger is a long-time contributor to Desert Magazine and the dean of ghost town writers. She has written many fine books on the West. Ghosts of the Glory Trail and Ghosts of the Adobe Walls, her latest book on Arizona ghost towns, are available through the Desert Magazine Book Shop.

Adams Mine A Hoax? . . .

It may interest your readers to know that Albert G. Walker of Coarsegold, California, informs me that the story of the lost Adams Diggings was concocted out of thin air by students at the New Mexico School of Mines at Socorro. If anybody ever finds it, it will truly be a miracle. But for an excuse to go prospecting, it's as good a one as any.

BURRELL C. DAWSON,
San Bernardino, Calif.

Peace of Mind . . .

During the last three years as proprietor of a small rock shop in Palm Desert one consistent act repeats itself over and over again, day after day. People come into my little shop and after a broad gaze around for orientation they are invariably drawn to the crystal display at one side of the store. Their voices drop to a murmur and their fingers stretch out to explore the beautiful facets created on the crystals so many eons ago. This almost reverent attitude has led me to a meditative mood and at this point I feel called upon to write my very first verse.

CRYSTALS

Touch your fingers to a crystal's face
Faceted by God with all His grace.

Feel your troubles fall far behind
As rock and spirit bring peace of mind.

DEXTER WOODS,
Palm Desert, California.

Military Vandals . . .

Through letters and articles in Desert Magazine we repeatedly read of the vandalism to historic sites, ghost towns, old abandoned mines and recreational areas. During a recent visit to the ghost town of Belmont, Nevada we had the pleasure of getting acquainted with Rose E. Walter, the oldest (76) living resident of this once great mining town. Rose is also a self-appointed caretaker for the preservation of this town.

During our visit, Rose gave us a tour of the area and brought to our attention a unique form of vandalism. While walking around the old Combination Mill, Rose pointed toward the large brick smoke stack and said, "Those pitted and gashed areas on the stack were done by military airplanes firing their machine guns at it. Airplanes from a nearby gunnery range."

Belmont is not completely deserted. A few people still live there and the indiscriminate firing by aircraft in every sense of the word is "vandalism from the sky" with the possibility of local residents getting hurt.

MICHAEL MILOCHIK,
Livermore, Calif.



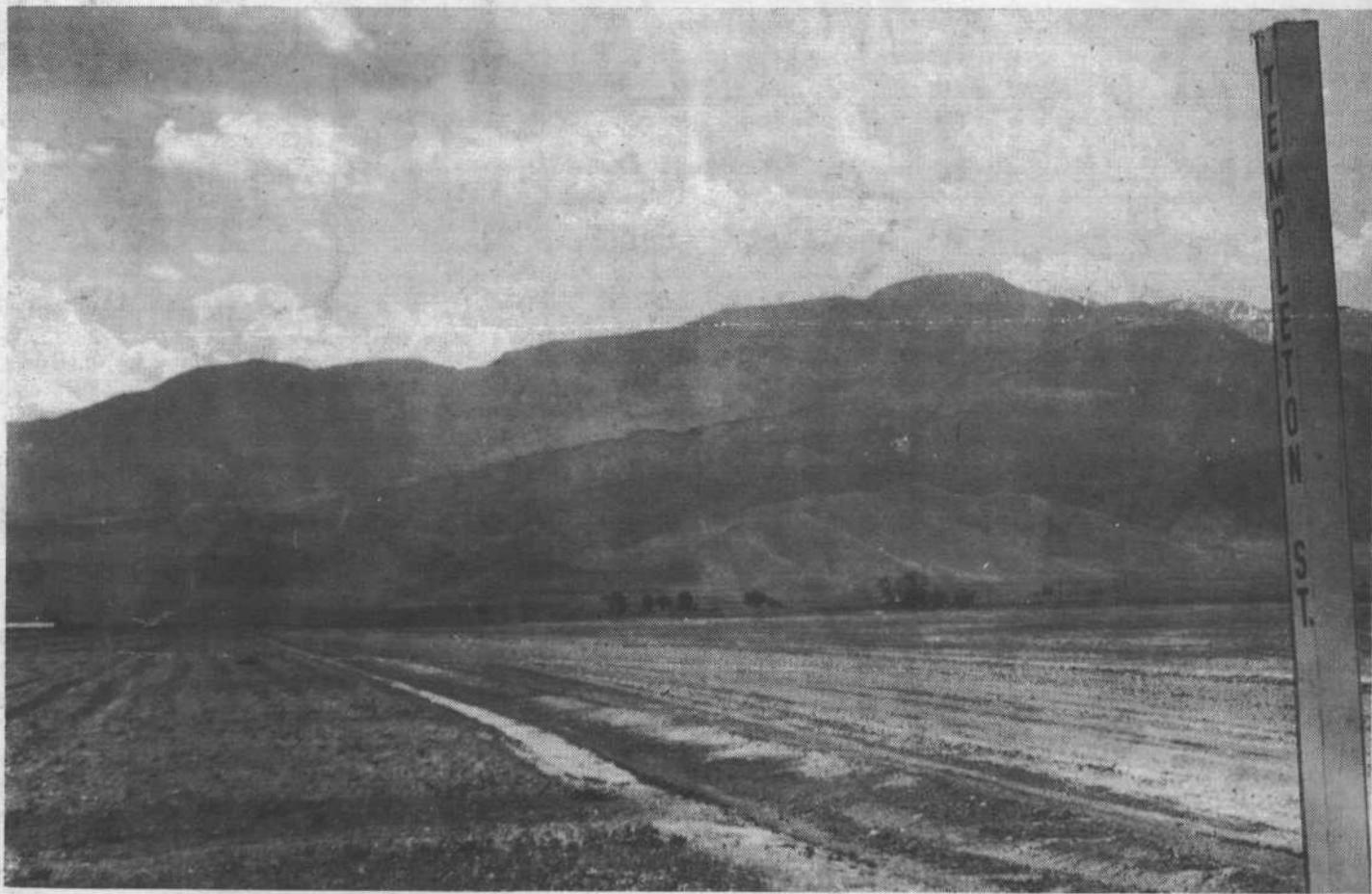
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